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THESIS

IRAN'S STRATEGY OF INFLUENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

by

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13. ABSTRACT

As Iran's nuclear capabilities continue to be at the forefront of policy and security issues for many nations, the methods by which Iran perpetuates further instability are equally strategic. Militant-proxy groups, such as Hezbollah, have significant military capabilities, as well as political influence that are the driving forces behind Iran's regional influence.

Concurrent to the intensive use of proxies, Iran is deliberately trying to weaken regimes through information framing. Iran's addresses to the Arab world are framed to a specific audience and with the tone of animosity towards the West and non-Muslims. Hezbollah also serves as a viable source for Iran's information framing; while Hezbollah's military and political sphere of influence within Lebanon continues to impose Lebanon's governmental control, Iran has achieved political success under Hezbollah's guise. This thesis explores the symbiotic relationship between Hezbollah and Iran and will center on how Iran has achieved relative success in destabilizing Gulf States. This thesis explores the overarching theme between the use of Hezbollah and information framing and the correlation between the reception of the Gulf region as observable effects of success.

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IRAN'S STRATEGY OF INFLUENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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ABSTRACT

As Iran's nuclear capabilities continue to be at the forefront of policy and security issues for many nations, the methods by which Iran perpetuates further instability are equally strategic. Militant-proxy groups, such as Hezbollah, have significant military capabilities, as well as political influence that are the driving forces behind Iran's regional influence.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The current trend in policy towards Iran often focuses on the growing Iranian nuclear threat; however, more critical to the evolution of Iran's power is an assessment of Iran's use of proxies, specifically Hezbollah and information framing. Iran's strategy is to enhance its influence in the Middle East both through the use of local proxies and through the shaping of information in ways designed to undercut regime stability in Arab countries. Through its symbiotic relationship with Hezbollah, Iran is achieving a level of deniability, as well as tactical buffers between Gulf States; furthermore, information framing is targeted towards neighboring regimes with the intent to create the illusion that Iran's actions are categorically linked to unwarranted and unwanted Western influence. While Hezbollah emerged during the Iranian Revolution seemingly an Iranian organization from day one, the evolution of the organization into a mainstream political party has reenergized Iran's strategic position in the Gulf. In order to understand Iran's capabilities, the viewpoint must be from the periphery; where analysts gauge Iran's power from the center (i.e., Tehran), the true nature of Iran's capabilities must be observed from Lebanon.

From the perspective of Iranian leaders and from the perspective of Hezbollah's framing strategy, Iran has demonstrated strengths in its abilities to mobilize support from citizens of the Gulf region, while maintaining a threat to governmental emissaries. Iran's framing process is the most lethal instrument in its destabilization campaign.

This thesis analyzes Iran's overarching destabilization goal: to use proxies intensely and to try deliberately to weaken regimes through information strategy. The thesis demonstrates a causal understanding of Iran's influence by analyzing the symbiotic relationship between Iran and Hezbollah and the level of reciprocity of Gulf States to Iran's information campaign. When analyzed, Iran's intensified use of Hezbollah and information framing, in its destabilization campaign, indicates that Iran's role in the Gulf region has extended beyond sovereign confines.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION

As Iran's nuclear capabilities continue to be at the forefront of policy and security issues for many nations, the methods by which Iran perpetuates further instability are equally strategic. Militant-proxy groups, such as Hezbollah, have significant military capabilities as well as political influence that are the driving forces behind Iran's regional influence. As a result of Iran's military proxies in the Gulf region, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members are reevaluating security measures to counter Iran's web of connections. The practicality of Iran's proxy warfare in the combat of regional adversaries is, in all respects, a deliberate strategy to intensify the spread of Iranian influence in the Arab world.

Concurrent to the intensive use of proxies, Iran is deliberately trying to weaken regimes through information framing. Iran's addresses to the Arab world are framed to a specific audience and with the tone of animosity towards the West and non-Muslims. Iran's strategic spokespersons seemingly remove themselves from the regime and then claim Iran's problems, or courses of destabilization, are the result of Western influence or diplomatic "misunderstandings."[1] Hezbollah also serves as a viable source for Iran's information framing; while Hezbollah's military and political sphere of influence within Lebanon continues to impose Lebanon's governmental control, Iran has achieved political success under Hezbollah's guise.

Elements of this thesis center on the approach in which Iran has used information framing and the intensified use of the proxy group Hezbollah to destabilize Gulf States. It will focus on how Iran has used Hezbollah to frame political issues and spread Iranian influence to the general population. As Hezbollah continues to transform into a legitimate political and social organization, this thesis will explore the symbiotic relationship between Hezbollah and Iran and will center on how Iran has achieved

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[1] Anthony A. Cordesman and Martin Kleiber, *Iran's Military Forces and Warfighting Capabilities* (Westport, CT: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007), 20.

relative success in destabilizing Gulf States. This thesis explores the overarching theme between the use of Hezbollah and information framing, and the correlation between the reception of the Gulf region, as observable effects of success.

B.   BACKGROUND

Understanding the significance of Hezbollah to Iran's influence campaign requires an analytic assessment of Iran's capabilities as a state. As Anthony A. Cordesman and Martin Kleiber write, "Iran carries out activities under diplomatic cover, uses commercial entities and dummy corporations, and sometimes uses elements of Iran's regular forces."[2]   However, since Hezbollah remains the primary proxy force for Iran, Iran's strategy is significantly rooted in Hezbollah's individual campaign.   Since Hezbollah has been assessed to be a threat to regional interests by GCC countries and the United States, it is important to understand the criticality of Hezbollah in Iran's information framing and influence campaign.

C.   PROBLEMS AND HYPOTHESIS

The challenge raised in valuing the level of Iran's success in its influence campaign is from the lack of a fluent methodology for effectively gauging the level of reciprocity. Though public-opinion polls highlight the perceptions of Iran and Hezbollah, the perceived problem in analyzing polling data are the analytical misconceptions that are present in the conclusions. Public data is often debatable through the methodologies and specifically by Arab practices (i.e., censorship as influence); therefore, if reports indicate that Arab-nation populations find widespread concern about Iran, yet they fail to assess all of the data, the conclusion is inherently flawed.

Gregg Carlstrom addresses this perceived problem in polling data successfully. Carlstrom notes that in a public opinion poll conducted in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon,

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[2] Cordesman and Kleiber, *Iran's Military Forces and Warfighting Capabilities*, 202.

Morocco, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates,[3] widespread concern about Iran's nuclear program is present; however, he further analyzes the data and recognizes inherent flaws in evidence that should suggest that Arab publics do not view Iran as an existential threat.[4] Carlstrom pinpoints the polling flaws and analytical misconceptions:

> The survey does find widespread concern about Iran's nuclear program: 58 percent of respondents think Iran wants nuclear weapons, and 40 percent support "pressur[ing] Iran to stop its program." Further on, though, the poll asks respondents to pick the two countries 'that you think pose the biggest threat to you.' Israel is first, at 88 percent; the United States is second, at 77 percent. Iran (13 percent) comes in slightly ahead of China (9 percent).[5]

Furthermore, analytical assumptions and conclusions are based on governmental strategies; while public-opinion polls may indicate that the *public* perceives Iran and its proxy, Hezbollah, as an indirect threat, reports often highlight Arab and Western *governments'* perceptions of Iran's influence. Two archetypal themes appear: one that casts Iran as a formidable threat in the region and Hezbollah as a "terrorist group," fighting to spread Iran's Islamic Revolution (started in 1979); the second portrays the policies of Iran as "misunderstood" and Hezbollah as a legitimate resistance organization, acting as a proxy force for Iran. This thesis argues that while Iran is a formidable threat in the region, through its intensified use of Hezbollah, which has transformed itself into a legitimate political actor, Iran is maintaining a level of deniability that correlates with its influence strategy.

This thesis explores the contention that when Iran uses proxy groups such as Hezbollah to strike in foreign countries, and when it addresses the Arab world both as a state and strategically through Hezbollah, it does so in a way to try and drive wedges between nations—thus doing so successfully, to some degree.

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[3] The following study was used in Carlstrom's analysis: University of Maryland and Zogby International, "2009 Annual Arab Public Opinion Survey," *Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development*, April–May 2009, http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Files/events/2009/0519_arab_opinion/2009_arab_public_opinion_poll. pdf (accessed February 5, 2010).

[4] Gregg Carlstrom, "The Grand (And Mythical) Alliance Against Iran," *The Majlis*, February 2, 2010, http://www.themajlis.org/2010/02/02/the-grand-and-mythical-alliance-against-iran (accessed February 5, 2010).

[5] Ibid.

D.   LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature reviewed for this thesis is twofold: one set of sources explores Iran as an individual state-entity with non-state actors, and the second set of sources explores Hezbollah as an organizational entity. The first set of sources focuses on Iran as the ultimate military, asymmetric, ideological, and opportunistic threat in the Gulf region. Gauging historical trends and the current diplomatic struggle with Iran, the first set of sources identifies the broad scope of the Iranian threat. The second set of sources focuses on Hezbollah from two different perspectives: the first perspective represents Hezbollah as a terrorist organization, acting on behalf of Iran; the second perspective represents Hezbollah as a rational actor and a social movement, while still maintaining an alliance with Iran. This thesis focuses on and argues for the second perspective, and focuses on the strategic gain for Iran.

Source material reviewed for this thesis included books, online newspaper articles, public-opinion polls, and other publications. While sources on Iran proved to be judgmental of Iran's current policy, such sources were a viable medium to understand the level of success that Iran has achieved in its efforts to spread the Iranian Revolution.

The best and most concise analysis and model for current trends is *Iran's Military Forces and Warfighting Capabilities: The Threat in the Northern Gulf*, by Anthony A. Cordesman and Martin Kleiber. Cordesman and Kleiber chronicle the intentions and capabilities that Iran has both maintained and enhanced since the Iranian Revolution. The narrative is straightforward and focuses on the capabilities of Iran's military sectors, programs, and strategic and ideological operations. While also providing a narrative analysis of Iran's capabilities, Cordesman and Kleiber provide numerous statistics and tables that gauge Iran's military strengths and evidence that suggests that Iran's strategy in the Gulf region is to wage a war of intimidation, with the intent to pressure its neighbors to either abandon policies or to drive wedges between nations who support action against Iran. Furthermore, Cordesman and Kleiber argue that Iran's use of state and non-state actors as proxies and partners is a critical element that will define the relative power that Iran may gain in the region.[6] Although Cordesman and Kleiber

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[6] Cordesman and Kleiber, *Iran's Military Forces*, 202.

address the possibility of Iran's intentions to use proxy groups as a strategic offense mechanism, they fail to definitively identify whether Iran's strategy is or has been successful.

However, Cordesman and Kleiber argue that Iran has been successful in *low-level operations*, with the use of proxy groups, because Iran is successfully intimidating Gulf States without making any react in a hostile way.[7] This argument suggests that Iran has demonstrated both successes and failures in its use of non-state actors: in low-level operations, the lack of accountability credits Iran in its strategic use of proxy groups because it demonstrates Iran's capabilities as a threat to the region while avoiding total conflict; however, in large-scale conflicts, Iran seemingly becomes entwined in far more serious conflicts with multiple countries. The use of case studies makes this assertion all the more persuasive.

A more definitive analysis of the gauge of Iran's level of success is given by Ronen Bergmen in *The Secret War with Iran*. While Cordesman and Kleiber focus on all of Iran's capabilities with emphasis on military intentions, Bergmen's analysis recognizes Iran's complexity and intensified use of proxy groups. As Bergman cites former U.S. director of national intelligence Michael McConnell:

> Iran's influence is rising in ways that go beyond the menace of its nuclear program. The fall of the Taliban and Saddam, increased oil revenues, Hamas's electoral victory, and Hezbollah's perceived recent success in fighting against Israel all extend Iran's shadow in the region…Iranian President Ahmadinejad's administration…has stepped up the use of more assertive and offensive tactics to achieve Iran's longstanding goals.[8]

As Bergman asserts, Iran has more than fully demonstrated success in the use of proxy groups beyond low-level intensity. Though Bergman's assertions address a more realistic approach to world leader's viewpoints on Iran's influence, Bergman, as well as Cordesman and Kleiber, fail to address what constitutes "success."

A first-hand perspective that offers both historical accounts of Iran's strategies as well as significant warnings about the importance of Hezbollah to Iran are accounted by

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[7] Cordesman and Kleiber, *Iran's Military Forces*, 203.

[8] Ronen Bergman, *The Secret War with Iran: The 30-Year Clandestine Struggle Against the World's Most Dangerous Terrorist Power* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 2007), 384.

Robert Baer in *The Devil We Know: Dealing With the New Iranian Superpower*. As an ex-CIA operative, Baer's accounts show that Iran has maneuvered itself into a powerful position in the region by engaging in a "soft takeover" through its proxy strategy.[9] Through anecdotes and clandestine-source information, Baer provides factual-account details about the ideological and theocratic differences that have blinded analysts into a mirror-imaging mindset. Particularly stirring is Baer's thematic message: Iran's nuclear capabilities are far less important than the legitimacy and potency of Hezbollah in Iran's influence campaign. Baer writes:

> Iran may not yet have nukes, but it has three things that are vastly more important: highly developed asymmetrical fighting skills and weapons; a growing army of hungry, disaffected, street-smart fighters; and an invincible anticolonial message.[10]

The upshot of the book is the point that Iran's power is ultimately gained from its asymmetric capabilities specifically through the use of Hezbollah, and that in order to oppress the current trend of destabilization in the region, the United States must opt to address Iran as an ally rather than a foe. Ultimately, as Baer argues, Iran's powerhouse exponentially increases, based on the success of its asymmetrical operations in other nations.

Augustus Richard Norton offers a non-biased, historical analysis of the chronicles of Hezbollah in *Hezbollah: A Short Story*. Accounting for the inception of Hezbollah until 2006, Norton's narrative is straightforward and offers casual predictions. Norton's analysis is indicative of the dynamic nature and the transformations of Hezbollah, from a radical guerrilla force to a legitimate social and political organization. While focusing on Hezbollah, Norton's premise seemingly argues for a reoccurring theme in Hezbollah's politics: Hezbollah is Iran's protégé.[11]

A more thorough and first-hand account of Hezbollah's dynamic nature and the receptiveness of the Arab public is Judith Palmer Harik's *Hezbollah: The Changing Face*

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[9] Robert Baer, *The Devil We Know: Dealing with the New Iranian Superpower* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2008), Introduction on front flap.

[10] Ibid., 111.

[11] Augustus Richard Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short Story*. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 72.

of Terrorism. Harik's analysis centers on the social-movement perspective of Hezbollah, whereby her perceptions of the United States, specifically the Bush Administration's aggressive stance towards Hezbollah, elicit possible predictions for Lebanon and the Gulf region. The most important element of Harik's analysis is the detailed accounts of Hezbollah's information framing, both from the standpoint of its strategies and gauging the level of success. Although Harik focuses more on Hezbollah's alliance with Syria, her evaluation of Hezbollah's addresses the Janus-faced nature by which Hezbollah operates and frames its messages, or poignantly, its "ideological ambiguity."[12]

Lastly, *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah*, edited by Nicholas Noe, is a compilation of the speeches between 1989 and 2006 given by the current leader of Hezbollah. Though Noe presents a brief historical context prior to each speech, his personal analysis extends only to address stirring points linked to U.S. interests. *Voice of Hezbollah* serves as a crucial analytical reference in understanding Harik's general assertion of Hezbollah's "ideological ambiguity." Furthermore, *Voice of Hezbollah* is insightful into seeing the progression of Hezbollah—from a clandestine militia to a mainstream political party.

E.   METHODS AND SOURCES

As mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, a methodology for effectively gauging the successfulness of Iran's methodology of spreading Iranian influence does not exist. In analyzing the literature, all indications suggest that there are multiple viewpoints on what constitutes "success." Information readily available is at best a strategic start to conduct personal analysis to determine a combination of perceptions that will link Iran's success to regional instability, disunity, and evaluation of security measures. Assessing the successfulness of Iran's strategies requires observing regional and government response. For example, observing the legitimacy of Hezbollah by Arab countries; or, how Iran's use of information framing is destabilizing regional alliances. This analytic methodology allows for a study of the efficacy of each method of Iran's strategy by

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[12] Judith Palmer Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd, 2005), 66.

analyzing the response to the dependent variable (i.e., Iran's effective influence) to the response of the independent variables (i.e., the reception of Iran's methodologies: use of proxies and information framing).

The source material, which supports this approach, is mainly public-opinion polls. Although problems exist in analyzing public-opinion data, it is necessary to determine the effectiveness of Iran's individual framing and Hezbollah's framing based on population (i.e., who the message targets and the response).

F.   THESIS OVERVIEW

The core of the thesis aims to show that Iran's strategy to enhance its influence in the Middle East is thematically linked to its use of proxies, specifically Hezbollah, and information framing, both from the state and Hezbollah.

The thesis is organized into three sections. The first section addresses the role of proxies to Iran and the function and achievements of Hezbollah, and the purpose that it serves Iran. The second section addresses the purpose of information framing and the significant power that Iran has gained from Hezbollah's popularity, which has also been achieved through information framing. The third section is the conclusion, which also addresses recommendations and parallel concerns.

II.   IRAN'S PROXY HEZBOLLAH: THE PUPPETEER AND THE PUPPET

A.   INTRODUCTION

As asymmetrical warfare is beginning to dominate modern battlefields, the critical questions of an opponent's capabilities and intent takes a new approach.   Where strategies once aimed to address alliances, foreign actors (i.e., proxies) must now be included in analysis. Proxies are used to serve a multitude of political purposes, but their fundamental role to a state is to provide deniability. Cordesman and Kleiber write: "The use of allies and proxies is generally cheap, reduces risk, and acts as a force multiplier. It also provides some degree of deniability—plausible or implausible…"[13] This "veneer of deniability" in which proxies operate allows both the state and the organization to work symbiotically to achieve political and military objectives.[14] Where many accounts of the use of proxies symbolize a puppeteer commanding a puppet (i.e., the proxy), it is perhaps an understatement of the credibility that the puppeteer achieves. Cordesman and Kleiber summate the reciprocities, or tactical achievements that proxies appropriate to Iran:

> Like direct forms of asymmetric operations, the use of foreign actors can be both defensive and offensive. It can also serve ideological and religious causes. It also is extremely difficult to establish a motive and the scale of such efforts under many conditions, particularly since they can be conducted without attribution to Iranian government support (false flags) or under conditions where the Iranian government can claim any document incident was a rogue operation it did not authorize. A sophisticated effort can take on the character of a three-dimensional chess game in which most of the one side's players are truly what they seem and that player keeps changing the rules without announcing the changes.[15]

The duality of the deniability-credibility nature that proxies achieve creates an interesting study. However, where most analytical assumptions target one entity more powerful than the other, Iran's proxy, Hezbollah, sheds vital light on Iran's exploitation of opportunities.   Iran's legitimacy as a formidable force has been significantly

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[13] Cordesman and Kleiber, *Iran's Military Forces*, 203.

[14] Bergman, *The Secret War with Iran*, ix.

[15] Cordesman and Kleiber, *Iran's Military Forces*, 203.

influenced by Hezbollah's *individual* rising support. The very core of Iran's power is significantly related to Hezbollah's political and military operations. Baer contends that Iran's proxy warfare is perhaps the most damaging element that strategists must address, because if a war should be fought in the Gulf, "Iran will almost certainly fall back on its asymmetrical tactics as weapons."[16] Where proxies serve to act as scapegoats or political buffers, Iran has seemingly turned Hezbollah into a power source of legitimacy. While analysts continue to scrutinize over Iran's intent, Baer has observed that Iran's strategy all along has been to use a war of proxies.

> Scratch away the veneer of Islam, and what you find in an Iranian is old-fashioned nationalism —a deep, abiding defiance of colonialism. Keep scratching and what you find at the bottom of Iran's soul is a newfound taste for empire. It runs through Iranian society, even among more secular Iranians. But Iran isn't a new Rome, intent on naked conquest, cultural diffusion, settlements, and religious conversion. What drives Iran to empire is something different. Call it destiny, entitlement, or even manifest destiny: what's critical to understand is that Iran today has an unshakable belief in its right to empire. It means to achieve this through proxy warfare and control over oil supplies.[17]

This chapter explains the function of Hezbollah to Iran's influence strategy. As the chapter shows, while Hezbollah emerged during the Iranian Revolution seemingly an Iranian organization from day one, the evolution of the organization into a mainstream political party has reenergized Iran's strategic position in the Gulf. In order to understand Iran's capabilities, the viewpoint must be from the periphery; where analysts gauge Iran's power from the center (i.e., Tehran), the true nature of Iran's capabilities and "imperial blueprint" must be observed from Lebanon.[18]

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[16] Baer, *The Devil We Know*, 110.

[17] Ibid., 4.

[18] Ibid., 5.

B.   BACKGROUND

1.   The Inception of Iran's Imperial Blueprint

While most nations think in presidential terms and years, Iran plans in terms of eras; following the same long-term goals of Ayatollah Khomeini's vision of an Islamic Republic, the modern state of Iran has patiently capitalized on chaos. In 1982, when Israel invaded Lebanon, Iran saw opportunities in extending its revolutionary ideologies. Like the recruitments of the Revolutionary Guards during the revolution, Iran has strategically used military actors for both offensive and defensive religious and ideological purposes.[19] Exploiting a deep sense of nationalism, Iran capitalized on the Islamic Revolution to wield significant influence over Lebanon's street and guerilla fighters.

> Combine this [strategy] with Lebanese rejection of occupation, add money
> and organization, and the Iranians discovered they would have at their
> service the most lethal guerrilla army in modern history…The Lebanon
> war is Iran's blueprint for its new empire, fought for and held by
> proxies.[20]

2.   Hezbollah's Emergence

Hezbollah's inception was a result of failures within active resistance-movements. As political mobilization of the Lebanese Shi'a, specifically the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), began to show signs of corruption amidst a population with a single cause to resist Israeli occupation, activism was revitalized in the form of Amal.[21] However, "In Lebanon political support is conditional and political loyalty sometimes has a short life."[22] Though Hezbollah fighters emerged during the civil war in Lebanon, the organization did not gain momentum until the dynamics of Amal began to

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[19] The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) was founded in 1979 by Ayatollah Khomeini to establish control over Iran and to undercut Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan's government. The Revolutionary Guards tortured and assassinated those opposed to the revolution. Currently, the Revolutionary Guards are almost entirely integrated into Iran's regular armed forces. For further information, see Sandra Mackey, *The Iranians* (New York: Penguin Group, 1998), 289–291.

[20] Baer, *The Devil We Know*, 54.

[21] Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 22.

[22] Norton, *Hezbollah*, 17.

unravel; as the PLO failed to provide a nationalist-idealistic cause, Amal had become a patronage system in which the Lebanese saw as pacification to its Syrian commands.[23] Norton writes:

> Syria has no overall interest in seeing Amal or Hezbollah (or any other political force) triumph in Lebanon, and its strategy in Lebanon has consistently followed the principles of Realpolitik. To paraphrase the dictum of Lord Pamertson, Syria has neither eternal allies nor perpetual enemies in Lebanon.[24]

Although paradoxical, Shi'ite revolutionaries turned to Iran as a source of support. Iran became an ideological inspiration to many Shi'ite groups that believed Khomeini's rhetoric of the "Great Satan" had penetrated the Arab world. Through Khomeini's anti-Western rhetoric, many Shi'ite militants had the opportunity to use Islam as a means to wage war against the infidel. Khomeini's comments that wars between governments, specifically secular nations of the Gulf region and Iran, are not simply invasions, but rather rebellions against Islam, further exemplified the Lebanese Shi'ite identity.[25] Hezbollah used Iran's radicalized message of Islamic resistance, which struck a chord for other opposition-minded Muslims. Furthermore, in a 1985 letter addressed to the "Downtrodden in Lebanon and in the world," Hezbollah emphasized the Iranian Revolution as an inspiration of action:

> We address all the Arab and Islamic peoples to declare to them that the Muslim's experience in Islamic Iran left no one any excuse since it proved beyond all doubt that bare chests motivated by faith are capable with God's help of breaking the iron and oppression of tyrannical regimes…It is time to realize that all the Western ideas concerning man's origin and nature cannot respond to guidedness and ignorance.[26]

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[23] Norton, *Hezbollah*, 23.

[24] Ibid., 35.

[25] Mackey, *The Iranians*, 319.

[26] Augustus Richard Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987), 183–84.

In Hezbollah's worldview, resisting occupation was a legitimate duty in order to defend Islam and ultimately the Lebanese Shi'i identity. Harik indicates the level ideological and cohesive effects of the Iranian revolution with the direct formation and conditioning of Hezbollah:

> These men, and others like them, suited Iran's foreign policy requirements in terms of their ideological commitments and willingness to act upon them, as some had already demonstrated in the terrorist operations allegedly sponsored by the Islamic Republic in West Beirut. These men and other committed Shiite fundamentalists who, after 1979, were swept up by the Iranian Revolution and shared its goals could be helped by Iran's Revolutionary Guards to form an organizational structure and to cohere around a local leadership that would be able to exploit the opportunity for militant jihad being offered...Iran's support for this group, which would eventually become Hezbollah, could deliver two important foreign policy goals: the capacity to fight Israel through a proxy, which allowed it direct entrance into the Middle East war/peace equation and the expansion of Shiite Islam's influence in Lebanon through Hezbollah's developing role there.[27]

The strings of the puppeteer, entwined with political and religious ideologies and under a veneer of deniability, were solidified; Iran's "Great Satan" had become "the mother of all malice" to Hezbollah.[28]

3. Hezbollah's Mobilization and Legitimization

From the time that the Revolutionary Guards began to train Hezbollah guerilla fighters, in the 1980s, the violence for Hezbollah began. The bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Beirut in April 1983 was often marked as the first catastrophic event to demonstrate Hezbollah's capabilities. However, where the veneer of deniability is evident is in the fact that, "Hezbollah has never admitted any involvement in these attacks and no concrete evidence has been presented by the United States government linking the fundamentalist group to them."[29] Though Iran may have been complicit in the attack, Hezbollah's role is a bit murkier. Another crucial element to Hezbollah's

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[27] Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 39–40.

[28] Hala Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born With a Vengeance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 57.

[29] Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 65.

legitimization was the debut of its 1985 manifesto, the aforementioned "Downtrodden in Lebanon and in the world," in which Hezbollah's spokesperson, Sheikh Ibrahim al-Amin, declared Hezbollah's objectives. Hezbollah's three objectives included: "putting an end to any colonialist entity" in Lebanon, brining the Phalangists to justice for "the crimes they [had] perpetrated," and the establishment of an Islamic regime in Lebanon.[30] Along with the objectives, the booklet outlined Hezbollah's political agenda, as well as its direct Iranian orientation:

> We, the sons of Hezbollah's nation in Lebanon, whose vanguard God has given victory in Iran and which has established the nucleus of the world's central Islamic state, abide by the orders of a single wise and just command currently embodied in the supreme exemplar of Ayatollah Khomeini.[31]

During a time of extreme exultation created from a string of military successes, Hezbollah also used the booklet to address and justify its use of violence. From the June 1985 hijacking of TWA flight 847 to the dozens of kidnappings of foreigners, Hezbollah had established itself as a malevolent force, acting under the auspices of Iran.[32]

> Although Iran did not exercise direct control of the kidnappings, its revolutionary regime did exert strong ideological influence and was particularly effective at sowing the suspicion that Westerners in Lebanon were agents for imperialist Americans and Israelis.[33]

Though the West viewed Hezbollah as fanatics and terrorists, the rhetoric of fierce ideological tenor of the document solidified Hezbollah's power over the Lebanese Shi'ite community. Norton writes:

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[30] Ted Dekker and Carl Medearis, *Tea with Hezbollah: Sitting at the Enemies' Table Our Journey through the Middle East* (New York: Doubleday, 2010), 237.

[31] Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born With a Vengeance*, 54.

[32] The highjacking of TWA Flight 847 was masterminded by Imad Mughniyah, linked to Hezbollah's External Security Organization. The highjacking was intended to be a brokerage between Israel for the release of 766 Lebanese prisoners held in Israel.

[33] Norton, *Hezbollah*, 73–4.

Imam Khomeini, the leader, has repeatedly stressed that America is the reason for all our catastrophes and the source of all malice. By fighting it, we are only exercising our legitimate right to defend our Islam and the dignity of our nation.[34]

Discussed thoroughly in Chapter III, Hezbollah framed the document to elicit national sympathy for a struggle over meaning and values; Hezbollah's violence was to uphold the "dignity of [Lebanon]." However, the violence was justified, both kidnapping, as a weapon, and airplane hijackings served Iran's operations in three significant ways. First, they demonstrated Hezbollah's capabilities and intent; second, they caused the departure of many foreigners in Lebanon, a stated goal in the 1985 document; third, as the political purposes of Iran were entwined with Hezbollah's actions, Iran's iron fist controlled Hezbollah's violence without sanctions by the West.

Sayyid Muhammad Hussein Fadlallah, the spiritual compass for Hezbollah, expressed concerns over the hijacking operations, which became a motivation to Hezbollah to disenfranchise from the radical policies of kidnapping and religious fervor. Fadlallah warned: "We must not get carried away by this method [of highjacking]. Today you hijack, and tomorrow you are yourself the victim of highjack.'"[35] To deaf ears, Fadlallah's message "came up against a blank wall, because there is a mysterious force that is behind these actions."[36] Though Hezbollah would restructure its radical policies, the link to Iran remained the mysterious force.

> With Khomeini's death in 1989, this charismatic symbol of the revolution was replaced by men of more modest views who now had to address the mundane but daunting challenges of restoring post-revolutionary Iran. The Iranian president Alik Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani and the new Iranian leadership of the early 1990s moved to reorient their policy more toward the broader Shi'i community and Lebanon as a whole, distancing themselves from militias, at least for a few years. Internecine fighting between Amal and Hezbollah had provoked a significant change of attitude in Tehran, where the bloodletting in Lebanon was viewed with disgust. Because the vicious fighting between the two groups cost many civilian lives, Rafsanjani reacted sharply, pointedly condemning both sides

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[34] Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a*, 170.

[35] Bergmen, *The Secret War with Iran*, 103.

[36] Ibid.

for their actions. But Iran was not merely outraged at the bloodshed in Lebanon, for 1990 marked the closing days of the Cold War, the assembling of an international coalition against Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and the long overdue end of the Lebanese civil war. Thus Iran was adjusting to the new balance of power in the world in which U.S. power was without rival.[37]

Embracing Iran's change in worldview, Hezbollah began its restructuring campaign. While the 1989 Taif Accord proposed to change the imbalance of Lebanese politics, Hezbollah embraced both the political ramifications of the transference of opportune power and the right to legitimization as a resistance force.[38]

4. Hezbollah's Restructuring: Emerging From the Violence and Into Politics

Though Hezbollah realized that in order to maintain a legitimate presence in Lebanon while remaining loyal to Iran, the regional turmoil of the early and mid-1990s were imperative to Hezbollah's restructuring and playing by the "rules of the game."[39] Political compromise was seemingly the only option for Hezbollah to maintain popular support and representation. Norton writes:

> Fadlallah argues that, because revolutionary transition to Islamic rule and an Islamic state was impossible in the diverse Lebanese society, gradual reformation was necessary. And that, insisted Fadlallah, required participating in the political system.[40]

Not only did Hezbollah understand that political participation was a necessary step in revitalizing its image in Lebanon,

> 'The real change came in 1991,' Timur Goksel recalled. First of all I think they mainly improved their field security. They had realised that they had allowed themselves in the past to become oversized, and if a guerrilla organisation is too big then it is easy to track. The military

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[37] Norton, *Hezbollah*, 44–45.

[38] The Taif Accord justified the maintenance of Hezbollah's armed forces and became known as "Islamic resistance" groups rather than militias.

[39] Norton, *Hezbollah*, 83.

[40] Norton, *Hezbollah*, 99. In the 1992 elections, Hezbollah won twelve seats in the Lebanese parliament and routinely wins around 10 percent of all its parliamentary seats.

tactics used were of a professional caliber. They included intelligence and reconnaissance. Their attacks had all the elements and ingredients of military operations.[41]

Hezbollah's tactics evolved; rather than limiting its scale of destruction to guerrilla style tactics, Hezbollah embraced the art of both guerrilla warfare and conventional war. Both strategies proved pivotal between 1996 and 2000, when Hezbollah engaged in fighting with Israel. In what would become a tit-for-tat cycle of violence between Israeli soldiers and Hezbollah, Operation Grapes of Wrath proved to be the emergence of the modern perceptions of Hezbollah's capabilities.

> This time would prove to be no different. The offensive served to bring the people even closer to Hezbollah's Islamic Resistance and they turned their wrath against the occupation instead. It also reawakened a sense of bitterness against the West. Muslims interpreted the Western powers' lack of action as proof of further tacit collusion with Israel…Israel was once again getting away with its actions in Lebanon.[42]

Israel's attempts to eliminate Hezbollah had caused an unintended effect: the cycle of violence in the once divided Lebanon created unity to a cause, and such unity was instilled by Hezbollah. Lebanon's former Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri expressed the government's growing tolerance of Hezbollah when he claimed that it was not the government's duty to stop Hezbollah's "resistance."[43] While diplomacy and negotiations continued to be breached, it became evident that Hezbollah was achieving more aims than Israel's vision of the destruction of the organization. In the wake of Operation Grapes of Wrath, provoked by a cease-fire agreement in April 1996, Hezbollah had victoriously won the political support that it had intended for in its restructuring campaign. Jaber writes:

> The Americans' argument…was that if Israel was to be condemned then Hezbollah should be condemned as well. Lebanon objected to this on the basis that it could not allow a legitimate resistance to be treated in the same manner as a country launching the aggression; to allow Hezbollah to be condemned would set a precedent for the condemnation of any future

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[41] Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born With a Vengeance*, 37.

[42] Ibid., 172.

[43] Ibid., 173.

resistance against Israel…The Lebanese mission's argument was a remarkable recognition of Hezbollah's legitimacy. Prior to 'Operation Accountability,' [in 1993] the Lebanese government had disputed the merits of the Islamic Resistance…In the wake of 'Operation Grapes of Wrath,' Lebanon was prepared to defend Hezbollah's right to exist before the world.[44]

Although paradoxical, from guerrilla warfare to conventional war, Hezbollah emerged from the violence a political and military victor. The unprecedented outrage expressed by all faiths of Lebanon against Israel's offensive was the sense of national unity at the hands of Hezbollah's resistance. Hezbollah understood the effects and causations of war and with a united Lebanon, with Hezbollah as the ultimate guidance, Iran's foothold in the region was, for the first time, solidified. In 2003, Lebanon's former President, Emile Lahoud, expressed his stance on Hezbollah:

> For us Lebanese, and I can tell you a majority of Lebanese, Hezbollah is a national resistance movement [and] [i]f it wasn't for them, we couldn't have liberated our land. And because of that, we have big esteem for the Hezbollah movement.[45]

In 2009, Hezbollah published a new manifesto in which the earlier religious rhetoric found in the 1985 document was nullified by the political and revolutionary agenda. Hezbollah outlines its basic political principals in Chapter II: Israel is a threat to Lebanon and Hezbollah must keep arms to defend Lebanon; political sectarianism should be eliminated; and its opposition to federalism.[46] Focusing extensively on Lebanon, Hezbollah grasped the very core of domestic policy in congruence with the Lebanese identity; to ensure a national unity, the new manifesto is the epitome of Hezbollah's evolution. Jaber's analysis has proven victorious: "[Iran's] aim was to promote Hezbollah so that it became the sole Shiite Islamic force in the country, as a prelude to Iran's final phase of replacing the Lebanese political system with an Islamic order."[47]

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[44] Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*, 188–89.

[45] Rebecca Leung, "Hezbollah: 'A-Team of Terrorists," *CBS 60 Minutes*, April 18, 2003, http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2003/04/18/60minutes/main550000.shtml (accessed February 21, 2010).

[46] "Full Text of Hezbollah's New Political Document," *Syrian News Station*, November 30, 2009, http://sns.sy/sns/?path=news/read/7187 (accessed February 21, 2010).

[47] Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*, 31.

C.   ANALYSIS OF HEZBOLLAH'S OPERATIONS: THE VENEER OF DENIABILITY AND CREDIBILITY

Iran's investment in Hezbollah, both monetary and through ideological dissemination, has created a masterful organization that has maneuvered itself into the Lebanese identity. Where Hezbollah has found success in resisting Israeli occupation and the reconstruction of Lebanon, Iran has capitalized on Hezbollah's popular support. Without acting as a state aggressor, Iran has managed to calculate the necessary buffer between both hostile and complaisant actions and diplomacy. Cordesman and Kleiber argue that Hezbollah is Iran's version of low-level operations whereby,

> Low-level operations that intimidate a Gulf State or other neighbor without making it react in hostile ways can also succeed, although they involve careful balance and judgment. Simply building up military and security relations can provide both a defensive option and a potential threat to other powers without being a direct provocation.[48]

As aforementioned, Iran's relationship with Hezbollah is like a three-dimensional chess game; when Iran moves a piece (i.e., Hezbollah), the world, and the Gulf States, with more scrutiny, watch the actions of the piece, not the player. Iran has captured the very essence of deniability. Furthermore, Cordesman and Kleiber write:

> Sheer distance, and the tactical buffer caused by the need to bypass or overfly Arab states, gives Iran some freedom of action in supporting Hezbollah…This also allows Iran to build up its capabilities and influence by appearing to take the Arab side —although not if its efforts in nations like Lebanon provoke Arab states to see such actions as threatening their security or it provokes Israel to the point where its tenuous restraint turns into hostile action.[49]

The strategic adeptness that Hezbollah provides Iran is also intrinsically related to the sheer force that Hezbollah can provide for the capabilities of Iran's military power.

> No one can ignore the fact that Iran does have a large, if divided force structure…Its army has an active strength of around 350,000 men, although 220,000 are low-grade conscripts and its corps of technicians and noncommissioned officers is poorly trained and given limited initiative. Iranian training and doctrine have slowly improved over time, although

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[48] Cordesman and Kleiber, *Iran's Military Forces*, 203.

[49] Ibid.

> Iran has little practical experience with advanced command and control, targeting, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (IS&R), and electronic warfare capability…[The Iranian Army] is not…a modern maneuver force by any means.[50]

Conclusively,

> Iran has been more conservative in modernizing its conventional military forces. Iran has never rebuilt the level of conventional forces it had before its defeat in its war with Iraq in 1988. Iran's conventional military readiness, effectiveness, and capabilities have declined since the end of the Iran-Iraq War, and Iran has not been able to find a meaningful way to restore its conventional edge in the region.[51]

Iran *needs* Hezbollah; the sheer demonstrations of Iran's military forces exemplify Hezbollah's *necessity*.

As aforementioned, the use of proxies also creates a distorted perception of the chain of command. During Hezbollah's hostage-taking campaign, the sheer deniability of Iran's role became evident. Jaber credits an expert's explanation:

> The whole plan was designed in such a way that it would not be possible to recognise, identify or actually prove who the real brains behind such attacks were. It was beyond any intelligence services. This was not an individual group or an organisation which they could search for and eventually find.[52]

Furthermore:

> The beauty of the design, if one can describe it as that, is that nearly a decade later the intelligence services are still blaming Hezbollah as if it was one individual person. This is because no one yet has been able to come up with an accurate list of names or a break down as to who was behind what…and no one will ever be able to.[53]

Iran has a scapegoat; Hezbollah is Iran's mobilized political-agenda and Iran has mastered the politics of survival over the "Great Satan," through strategic deniability.

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[50] Cordesman and Kleiber, *Iran's Military Forces*, 196.

[51] Ibid., 29.

[52] Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*, 119.

[53] Ibid.

One point critical to deniability is secrecy, and as demonstrated by the absolved chain of command during Hezbollah's hostage campaign, Hezbollah maintains secrecy. Baer writes:

> Even the Iranians were astonished by Hezbollah's ability to keep a secret, a key to fighting any guerrilla war. In 1996, when Hezbollah launched an offensive against the Israelis, the Iranians called Hezbollah's secretary-general Hassan Nasrallah to Tehran. They wanted to be certain that Hezbollah fighters wouldn't reveal Iran's role. Nasrallah reassured Iran that Hezbollah's cadres would never betray Iran. They would lie, cover up, obfuscate—whatever was necessary—to keep Iran's involvement secret.[54]

Ironically, foreign diplomats and heads of state are not negligent to Iran's involvement, which adds to Iran's credibility. Baer's perceptions of Hezbollah's early campaigns of violence shed light on Iran's deception: "It's not that Hezbollah is doing the terrorism out of Lebanon. They did not do the U.S. Embassy in 1983 or the Marines. It was the Iranians. It's a political issue [in the U.S.] because the Israelis want the Americans to go after Hezbollah."[55] Furthermore:

> Asked whether Hezbollah's attack was considered an act of terrorism, [US Ambassador Vincent Battle] said that it did "not fall within the rubric" of terrorism, since Hezbollah had gone after 'combatant targets' and not civilians. That admission, a first from an American official, at last revealed that regardless of what the Party of God was doing in South Lebanon in terms of terrorist or resistance action, the United States of America wanted them out of business.[56]

Hezbollah is therefore the exemplary political buffer that Iran needs. In the politics of survival, it is easier to engage with an organization (i.e., organizational terrorism) than with an entire state (i.e., state terrorism). Thus, it appears that Iran has truly mastered and manipulated "the rules of the game."

However, the level of dependency is not one-sided; Hezbollah *needs* Iran. "To deny the Iranian aid issued to Lebanon's Hezbollah would be like denying that the sun provides light to the earth. Who can deny such a thing' says Sheikh Subhi Tufeili,

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[54] Baer, *The Devil We Know*, 75.

[55] Norton, *Hezbollah*, 78.

[56] Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 202.

Hezbollah's first leader."[57] In the brief re-emergence of fighting between Hezbollah and Israel, reports surfaced that indicated the level of direct support that the Revolutionary Guards had provided or modeled for Hezbollah. Such logistical support includes: "Iranian engineers and technicians, and experts from North Korea who were brought in by Iranian diplomats;" 200 missiles-units "technicians and experts who were trained in Iran;" and "assistance from the Iranian Foreign and Intelligence ministries."[58] Though Iran's investments have aided the success of Hezbollah's ongoing resistance movements, this has also enhanced the credibility of Iran's ability to use nonstate actors in disseminating its political agenda. As Iran can benefit from a scapegoat, Hezbollah has security in the fact that it is sponsored by a foreign state; therefore, attacks against Hezbollah can have the same effects as attacks against a state.

D.   CONCLUSION

As Lebanon's sentiments begin to favor Hezbollah and views of public perception idolize and adorn the resistance efforts achieved because of Hezbollah and its leaders, the United States, the "Great Satan," denounces Hezbollah and the terms "terrorism" and "terrorists" are commonly used to describe the organization. Jaber writes:

> Since the end of the Cold War, fear of Islamic militancy appears to have replaced the former dread of communism in the popular consciousness. Not only have Western governments fostered the climate of mistrust, but Arab regimes have also contributed in fear of the challenge which the Islamic trend poses to their legitimacy.[59]

However, seemingly connected to the Hezbollah's restructuring campaign, discussed further in Chapter III, is the fact that Hezbollah has transformed the outlook of Lebanon; popular awareness and support for the organization is solidified through all religious affiliations in Lebanon. In the midst of Lebanon's frequent Israeli destruction, Iran found

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[57] Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*, 150.

[58] Bergman, *The Secret War with Iran*, 257–58.

[59] Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*, 213.

Hezbollah's popular support as the necessity to extend its influence campaign. Through funding of social services and revitalizing the Lebanese identity, Hezbollah has managed to "impose order where there was none before."[60]

Though it is difficult to acquire any solid information about the extent of funds that Hezbollah receives from Iran, many reports suggest that it is in the tens of millions, annually; for war-torn Lebanon, reconstruction is the master guise under which Iran can spread its political and ideological agendas. It no longer seems the forefront of political discussion to analyze Iran's attempt to export its Islamic Revolution; where the analysis continues is in the fact that Iran has successfully manipulated a country (i.e., Lebanon) and its expansion of its capabilities for asymmetric warfare in the Gulf. Iran's "rules of the game" are opportunistic—to provoke a broader split between Arab nations and as Cordesman and Kleiber write, Iran has capitalized on "the region's obsession with using history to produce self-inflicted wounds."[61] More poignantly: "Iran…incited a revolution in Lebanon building on a core of only a few hundred proxy fighters and co-opted clerics, who eventually turned half the country into an Iranian outpost."[62]

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[60] Baer, *The Devil We Know*, 12.

[61] Cordesman and Kleiber, *Iran's Military Forces,* 219.

[62] Baer, *The Devil We Know*, 21.

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III. FRAMING IRAN'S INFLUENCE CAMPAIGN: INFLUENCING FROM LEBANON

A. INTRODUCTION

Information framing is in essence a system of codes, whereby each code may differ significantly depending on the audience. As all intricate systems in politics, information framing is a device in which the political message or ideology is presented in a manner in which the audience's perceptions of the message will generate "vague feelings of anger and resentment into tangible, easy-to-define grievances."[63] Aslan continues:

> It can also connect local and global grievances that may have little or nothing to do with one another under a 'master frame' that allows a movement's leaders to encompass the wider interests and diverse aspirations of their members.[64]

In order for a framing process to generate success, states and organizations must "find consistency with deeply held cultural values."[65] Where Iran has the foundations for a successful campaign is the fact that Islam, the original "master plan" for Iran, is rich in narratives, symbols, and devout rituals; Iran can and has framed issues that have encouraged solidarity and transformed potential mobilization, behind a cause, into actual mobilization. Furthermore, frames "represent interpretive schemata that offer a language and cognitive tools for making sense of experiences and events in the 'world out there.'"[66]

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[63] Reza Aslan, *How to Win a Cosmic War: God, Globalization, and the End of the War on Terror* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2009), 53.

[64] Aslan, *How to Win a Cosmic War*, 53.

[65] Emmanuel Karagiannis, "Hizballah as a Social Movement Organization: A Framing Approach," *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism*, June 12, 2009, http://www.ict.org.il/Articles/tabid/66/Articlsid/786/currentpage/1/Default.aspx (accessed April 3, 2010).

[66] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Introduction: Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory," in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach* ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2004), 15.

William O. Beeman summarizes the importance of such codes:

> It is impossible for nations engaged in communication with each other not to engage in the use of tropes and figures of speech to characterize themselves and others. Both metaphors and euphemism are part of the codes of communication used by political leaders to speak both to each other and to their own constituents. The codes may differ significantly depending on the audience. Such differences in codes can also imply a difference in the *key* of the message —the manner in which the statement is to be taken.[67]

Iran's framing process is from two peripheries: Iran as a state, and through Hezbollah, the disseminator of Iran's ideologies. This chapter seeks to explore the tactics by which Iran frames its destabilization campaign and the level of reciprocity the Gulf region has to such frames. From the perspective of Iranian leaders and from the perspective of Hezbollah's framing strategy, this chapter will explain, in further detail, the necessity of Hezbollah to Iran. Coupled with both aspects of information framing, Iran has demonstrated strengths in its abilities to mobilize support from citizens of the Gulf region while maintaining a threat to governmental emissaries. As the final chapter will reveal, Iran's framing process is the most lethal instrument in its destabilization campaign.

B.   IRAN: "THE GREAT SATAN" VS. "THE BAD MULLAHS"

As the Iranian Revolution charged that imperialism is a threat against the sovereignty of Islam, Iran has maintained a posture of anti-imperialism; but instead of capitalizing on subordination and obeisance, Iran focuses on the nation as a person metaphor, whereby Iran is not the belligerent but instead the prey. Iran's campaign to destabilize the Gulf region is from a Cold War perspective: "us" vs. "them." Ironically, but particularly advantageous to Iran's strategy, is the fact that it is using an approach of provocative rhetoric with empty gesture. Where the United States focuses on seemingly the same strategy, characterizing Iranian rule and military strategy as irrational and hostile, Iran assumes the role as the victim. In international settings, President Mahmoud

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[67] William O. Beeman, *The "Great Satan" vs. the "Mad Mullahs:" How the United States and Iran Demonize Each Other* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2008), 40.

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Ahmadinejad assumes a hostile position, but he does so in a way that allows him to shift the charge to reflect the faults of the United States. In August 2010, Ahmadinejad warned, yet condemned, the United States:

> Let me clarify the outrageousness of the American-Zionist position. We in Iran are in the middle of two American armies, in Iraq and Afghanistan, and confronted by a wicked Zionist state armed with a hundred nuclear weapons, and an imperialist United States poised with thousands of deliverable nukes, yet these two criminal actors on the international stage want us to continue to submit to their hegemony and their nuclear monopolies. Imagine how terrified Americans would be if they lacked nuclear weapons and were threatened by armies from a powerful nuclear nation occupying both Canada and Mexico. That in every way is analogous to our situation. Of course, that does not mean Iran is seeking nuclear weapons. We seek only peaceful nuclear energy and, as signatories of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, have been quite cooperative in permitting international inspectors to examine our facilities.[68]

In one simple message, Ahmadinejad delivered a threat, but rebuked by framing the United States as the belligerent. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton commented on Iran's strategy: "Iran has a history of making confusing, contradictory, and inaccurate statements designed to convey the impression that it has adopted a flexible attitude…"[69] Flexibility, linked to deceit, is the very characteristic that allows Iran to avoid accountability, but remain credible to the *potential* threat. Such mired rhetoric allows Iran to maintain an offensive stance, but appear to have the capabilities to tackle "what-if" scenarios—this leaves Gulf state rulers, as well as the United States, to assess the credibility of "confusion" and "contradictions." Cordesman and Kleiber summate:

> Iran has developed a mix of think tanks, strategic spokespersons, and "dialogue" that involves an awkward mixture of professional apologists and extremists. Iran has sometimes sent such individuals as a virtual "traveling circus" to other countries or meetings in Iran. Such spokespersons, who somewhat distance themselves from the regime, then claim Iranian actions are misunderstood, grand bargains are at hand that

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[68] "President Ahmadinejad Warns Israel and the United States," *GeorgeThomasClark.com*, August 24, 2010, http://www.georgethomasclark.com/?p=1765 (accessed August 28, 2010).

[69] Colum Lynch, "Adhmadinejad Warns Against U.S. Sanctions," *The Washington Post*, May 4, 2010, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/05/04/AR2010050405104.html (accessed June 4, 2010).

can resolve all differences, and Iran's problems are the result of Western misunderstanding and a failure to listen, be "fair," and accept a truce dialogue.[70]

However, it would be false to assume that Iran is an irrational and rogue state; the very nature of framing requires a degree of false perceptions and linguistic spins. Baer writes:

> Iran has convinced its enemies that attacking it comes at too high a price. As the rhetoric picked up with the United States in 2007, Iran sent emissaries to all the Gulf states with one simple message: If the United States attacks us, we will destroy your oil facilities.[71]

This warning also extends to GCC countries, because to conquer the "Iranian threat," the United States has in essence, created a "regional cooperation against so-called Iranian expansion."[72] GCC rulers are cautious; though, for a different reason than what Western media often capitalizes on—Iran's potential nuclear-threat. Iran is a regional military-threat, but more identifiable, cooperation amongst Gulf leaders is intrinsically related to the marginalization of Sunni power. Zweiri analyzes: "[The marginalization of Sunni power] touches emotional, religious and historic chords and changes they [Arab leaders] don't like…It's a big emotional hurdle for the Sunnis in the region to accept."[73] Furthermore,

> At the most senior level, King Abdullah of Jordan has warned of a "Shia crescent" "stretching from Iran all the way through Iraq to Syria and Lebanon," and President Husni Mubarak has admitted that Iran "exerted strong influence" over Iraq's majority Shia population and Shias living in other Arab countries.[74]

It is therefore evident that Iran has framed two messages to different audiences: one, to the United States and the cooperative Gulf States, and the other to the populations of the

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[70] Cordesman and Kleiber, *Iran's Military Forces*, 20.

[71] Baer, *The Devil We Know*, 209.

[72] Mahjoob Zweiri, "Arab-Iranian Relations: New Realities?" in *Iran's Foreign Policy: From Khatami to Ahmadinejad* eds. Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Mahjoob Zweiri (Berkshire, UK: Ithaca Press, 2008), 126.

[73] Zweiri, "Arab-Iranian Relations: New Realities?" 120.

[74] Ibid.

Gulf region. As Iran has framed a message of victimization and "misunderstandings" to Gulf leaders, it has used the same discourse to address the citizens of Arab countries.

"The Great Satan" is at the forefront of Iranian framing towards Gulf state populations. Connotations of Islamic thought are imperative to understand the anti-imperialism rhetoric that Iran elicits:

> No image could be more deeply evocative than the characterization of the United States as The Great Satan by Iran. However, even this is subject to misunderstanding. Satan is not merely a figure of evil in Islam. He is a jinn created from fire, bright, beautiful, and jealous of humanity. Therefore, he tempts humankind to stray from God's path. In characterizing the United States in this way, Iranian revolutionaries were trying to emphasize the fact that America led Iran astray from its correct religious and spiritual path.[75]

Though sectarian lines polarize the politics in the Islamic world, at which Iran aims to divide even further, the fact remains that all Muslims have a united vision of "Satan." Therefore, as Iran's rhetoric espouses the United States in such a context, Sunnis are included in the ideological framing process. Iran has manifested a cause to include the wider interests of Islamic values. Ahmadinejad is viewed as a hero of the oppressed to much of the Gulf populations; his demonization of the United States and Israel appeal to Muslim masses.[76] While the international community discusses the ramifications of the Iranian nuclear threat, the masses discuss Israel and Palestinian rights. Dan Morrison poignantly writes:

> With his persistent jabs at America, Israel and the West, his apparent drive for a nuclear bomb and his workingman's wardrobe of off-the-rack suits, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has captured the Arab street… "He has the courage to stand up to America and Israel. Which other leader in the world is doing that?" said Ahmed Yassin.[77]

To the civilians in the Gulf region, Ahmadinejad has framed the issue to address oppression and extend issues on human rights. Shibley Telhami commented: "There is a

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[75] Beeman, *"The Great Satan" vs. the "Mad Mullahs,"* 43.

[76] Zweiri, "Arab-Iranian Relations: New Realities?" 122.

[77] Dan Morrison, "Ahmadinejad is the Unlikely Arab Hero," *Daily News & Analysis*, May 31, 2006, http://www.dnaindia.com/world/report_ahmadinejad-is-the-unlikely-arab-hero_1032642 (accessed June 1, 2010).

hunger for leadership in the Arab world, a hunger for change…Iran is reaping the benefit."[78]   While denying the Nazi Holocaust's realities, Ahmadinejad's excessive rhetoric has struck a chord with *Arabs*, demonstrating the wider interests of mobilization. Mahmoud Ali, a medical student in Cairo, remarked

> I like him [Ahmadinejad] a lot…He's trying to protect himself and his nation from the dangers around him. He makes me feel proud. He's a symbol of Islam. He seems the only person capable of taking a stand against Israel and the West. Unfortunately, Egypt has gotten too comfortable with Washington.[79]

> However, Iran's information framing does not come without a critical strategic-

flaw:

> In Iran…communication tends toward hierarchical skewing. It is frequently difficult for Iranians to maintain egalitarian discourse, particularly in the public arena. Therefore, speakers adopt the somewhat unusual strategy of using self-lowering forms in conjunction with other-raising forms, denigrating one's self while elevating one's interaction partner. When both parties do this simultaneously, the communication takes on a flavor highly characteristic of Iranian life. In the internal political arena, hierarchy is largely assumed. However, in dealing with foreign powers, such as the United States, Iran expects to be treated as an equal.[80]

Furthermore, "In a simple dichotomy, Iran alternates between revolutionary idealism and political realism. Theses oscillations breed discontinuity, increase vulnerability and limit diplomacy to tactical interactions."[81]

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[78] Morrison, "Ahmadinejad is the Unlikely Arab Hero," *Daily News & Analysis*.

[79] Jeffrey Fleishman, "Arabs See a Hero in Iran Leader," *Los Angeles Times*, September 24, 2007, http://articles.latimes.com/2007/sep/24/world/fg-ahmadinejad24 (accessed June 1, 2010).

[80] Beeman, *"The Great Satan" vs. the "Mad Mullahs,"* 43.

[81] Mahmood Sariolghalam, "Perceptions of Power and Multiplicity of Interests: Iran's Regional Security Policy," in *Arabian Gulf Security: Internal and External Challenges* (Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2008), 95.

C.   HEZBOLLAH: FRAMING FROM LEBANON

Information framing requires strategies, and as demonstrated in the previous chapter, Iran not only *needs* Hezbollah as a buffer, but it needs Hezbollah to frame Iran's influence campaign. Aslan writes:

> These so-called 'frame alignment techniques' allow social movements…to more easily create in-groups and out-groups. They help identify and, more important, vilify the enemy. They can even assist movement leaders in marking neutral bystanders as either sympathetic or antagonistic to the movement's cause, all with the aim of compelling people to join the movement and do something about their grievance. In short, framing helps members of a social movement make the difficult transition from collective identity to a collective action.[82]

In order to understand the full extent of Hezbollah's information-framing campaign, the topic of social movement theory (SMT) must first be presented.[83] Social movement theory is in essence the very context in which Hezbollah is able to maximize its frames. Included in the variables of SMT analysis is the framing process of the organization. At the very core of a social movement, the framing process allows the construction of meaning behind mobilized support. Wiktorowicz writes: "…movements must articulate and disseminate frameworks of understanding that resonate with potential participants and broader publics to elicit collective action."[84]

As all Islamic movements have capitalized on cultural and value frames, Hezbollah has successfully mobilized support in numerous ways. The most predominant and perhaps effective means of popular support is Hezbollah's use of cultural framing. Robinson writes: "To effectively popularize its ideology, a social movement must be able to provide clear summations of its ideology that resonate with its target audience."[85] As

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[82] Aslan, *How to Win a Cosmic War*, 53.

[83] SMT is an analysis of the collective actions and level of mobilization of an organization. David Snow and Susan Marshall were the first to present research on Islamic activism and SMT and have since emerged in the scholarly study of Islamic activism. The social movement approach to Islamic activism focuses on the structural strains, mobilizing ideologies, and resource mobilization of organizations and claims a balance between structural and rational choice models of analysis.

[84] Wiktorowicz, "Introduction: Islamic Activism and Social Movement Theory," 15.

[85] Glenn E. Robinson, "Hamas as a Social Movement," in *Islamic Activism: A Social Movement Theory Approach*, ed. Quintan Wiktorowicz (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2004), 129.

an Islamic organization, Hezbollah has relative ease addressing Islamic ideologies, thus furthering its strategic framework. However, most descriptions and theoretical analysis of Hezbollah's framing strategies fail to address the fluency that the organization has in framing issues outside of the diverse perceptions present in political Islam. Emmanuel Karagiannis' article on Hezbollah as a social movement addresses the successes of the organization's use of framing theory by the use of three processes: diagnostic framing, prognostic framing, and motivational framing.[86] Diagnostic framing is the same discourse as the political opportunity structure, whereby Hezbollah has identified the condition of Israeli oppression as problematic; the injustice frame (i.e., Israeli occupation in Lebanon) is the mode of Hezbollah's target strategy. Rather than defining Israel's occupation as a battle between Islam and Judaism, Hezbollah was able to achieve and frame a common ideology. In the press conference on Freedom Day, Secretary General of Hezbollah, Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, exemplifies Hezbollah's strategic framing:

> Regarding the possibility of war with an enemy [Israel] whose nature is aggression and treachery; an enemy that is thirsty for blood —and these are not speeches and poetry, but facts that we in the Arab World have been seeing for 60 years —no one can say that Lebanon is safe.[87]

Nasrallah does not specifically address the Muslim population; rather, he identifies *Arab World* and *Lebanon*, as a whole. Israel is identified as an expansionist state against the *people* of Lebanon—not identifiable by religious affiliation but rather a common ideology.

Parallel to Hezbollah's restructuring campaign and the modification of its political methodology, Hezbollah transformed the diagnostic frames to emphasize the "unfairness" of the Lebanese political system. In its 1992 Election Programme, Hezbollah emphasized the imperative cooperation

> with other devoted parties in order to complete the necessary steps towards the achievement of full liberation, the forging of internal peace on the basis of political concord that is furthest as could be from abominable

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[86] Karagiannis, "Hizballah," *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism.*

[87] Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, "H.E. Nasrallah's Press Conference on Freedom Day in Full: Detainees' File Still Open," *Islamic Resistance in Lebanon*, January 1, 2009, http://www.english.moqawama.org/essaydetailsf.php?eid=7532&fid=11 (accessed April 3, 2010).

sectarian biases or narrow confessional discriminations…maintaining devotion in all actions or follow-ups undertaken and utmost concern for the rights of citizens, their support, defence of their land, and safeguard of their pride and dignity.[88]

However, in order to maintain the mass support of Shi'ites, Hezbollah has also been critical towards the United States. As aforementioned in the previous chapter, Hezbollah's narrative is much like Iran's: the United States "conspires" and remains "the greatest Satan of all."[89]

The second process by which Hezbollah has framed issues is through prognostic framing. According to Karagiannis' research, prognostic framing offers the solutions to the problems identified in diagnostic framing.[90] Following the Iranian Revolution's model of an ideal and utopian Islamic-state, Hezbollah has offered much of the same propositions.[91] Therefore, popular support by Muslims is almost recognizably achievable; Hezbollah has established a purpose behind its political endeavors, whereby Shi'ite and Sunni Muslims can identify with a singular cause. However, as Karagiannis further recognizes, in the early 1990s, Hezbollah began to refrain from identifying a pan-Islamic cause. The organization changed its rhetoric to focus on the liberalization of *all* Lebanese; Karagiannis writes: "Following the end of the Lebanese civil war, Hizballah has maintained the role of a vanguard party, fighting for the rights of the 'oppressed.'"[92] It can be concluded that Hezbollah identifies the "oppressed" or has had rhetorical gains with those who are from all social classes and religious affiliations. By focusing on the broader population of Lebanon, Hezbollah has supported a pluralistic system where justice is the singular cause. Therefore, Hezbollah's once divine solution, directed at Muslims, has now shifted focus to offer divine solutions for Lebanese problems. Hezbollah has arguably achieved the greatest amount of popular support by offering solutions that are broad in the scope of audience. Harik writes:

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[88] Naim Qassem, *Hizbullah: The Story from Within* (London: Saqi, 2005), 276–7.

[89] Nicholas Noe, ed., and Ellen Khouri, trans., *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah* (London: Verso, 2007), 54.

[90] Karagiannis, "Hizballah," *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism*.

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

Hassan Nasrallah explained to me once that…a pillar in our movement is the need to respect others, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, and to forge the relations with them on a Koranic, moral basis. As Imam Ali said, "There are two kinds of people; either a brother in religion or a peer in morality—either a brother in Islam or an equal in humanity."[93]

The third process by which Hezbollah has framed issues is through motivational framing. Karagiannis argues that Hezbollah has been the most successful in motivational framing, because the organization has succeeded in gaining popular support from both its "hard-core Shia constituency" and its "expanding non-Shia audience." As aforementioned, Hezbollah has recently identified causes that are directed at human nature: fairness, equality, and justice. Although many scholars often identify Hezbollah as a sectarian organization, Nasrallah has attempted, and successfully achieved, to persuade non-Shia followers. On August 27, 2006, following the UN-mandated ceasefire that ended the Lebanese-Israeli war, Nasrallah addressed the population:

> …Israel has ambitions to rule within the framework of the new Middle East. Today, Hezbollah, along with its friends and allies, is the first defender of genuine sovereignty, genuine independence, and genuine freedom —and I add to them national dignity, honor, and pride.[94]

Nasrallah's emphasis on non-sectarian rhetoric has stressed the values of Hezbollah's *Lebanese* character; therefore, the social movement characteristics that define Hezbollah are gaining popular support through the population's identification of national appeal.

Hezbollah's motivational-framing process includes one of the most strategic links to Iran: social services. Hezbollah has dominated the public sphere with its involvement in providing social services to Lebanon's population:

> Hezbollah maintains that the lack of government spending, coupled with the long policy of neglect, left it with no choice but to tackle the situation itself. With Iran's help, it embarked on an ambitious enterprise to build an entire social welfare structure for the Shiite community. Iran saw the Shiites' dire circumstances as fertile ground for exporting its revolution

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[93] Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 78.

[94] Noe, *Voice of Hezbollah,* 403.

and channeled millions of dollars worth of aid and financial assistance to Hezbollah…[in order to] secure the allegiance of the Shiite population to Hezbollah and its Iranian mentors.[95]

Although deeply rooted in the political opportunity structure, following the 2006 Lebanon War, Hezbollah seemingly emerged as a more powerful entity than government officials when the population demanded financial support. Lebanon's views of the "corrupt and unresponsive political system" were realized when Hezbollah distributed "$12,000 payments to each family made homeless by the war."[96] No longer was Hezbollah viewed as a Shi'ite based organization; when the people demanded retribution from the government, Hezbollah provided the necessary mobilization. Furthermore, Karagiannis argues that Hezbollah has increased its support in the Arab world, thus legitimizing the organization as a national liberation movement, because it provides social services such as hospitals, schools, orphanages, and a television station.[97] Hezbollah's interests in social services demonstrate the organization's strength; providing invaluable support to all faiths, Hezbollah is able to generate durability and loyalty with its followers. Ken Silverstein addresses Hezbollah's outreach to all Lebanese citizens:

> Hezbollah offers an array of social services to its constituents that include construction companies, schools, hospitals, dispensaries, and micro-finance initiatives (notably al-Qard al-Hasan, literally the "good loan," which began making loans in 1984 and offers about 750 small loans a month). These tend to be located in predominantly Shiite areas, but some serve anyone requesting help. Hezbollah hospital and clinic staff also treat all walk-in patients, regardless of political views or their sect, for only a small fee.[98]

When identifying what causations exist in Hezbollah's support, it is fundamental to address the fact that ideologies aside, the organization offers support for an entire population and when professionals, working in Hezbollah's service sector, depend on

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[95] Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*, 147.

[96] Augustus Richard Norton, "The Role of Hezbollah in Lebanese Domestic Politics," *International Spectator* 42, no. 4 (2007): 486.

[97] Karagiannis, "Hizballah," *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism*.

[98] Ken Silverstein, "Augustus Norton on Hezbollah's Social Services," *Harper's Magazine*, March 14, 2007, http://harpers.org/archive/2007/03/sb-augustus-no-1173896326 (accessed March 28, 2010).

their livelihood from the organization, further political support is established. Therefore, it is problematic to assume that Hezbollah's popularity is based on Islamic fundamentalism.

Similar to Iran's predicament with the United States' framing towards the organization, Hezbollah has found use of the media to present a new look to "the Iranian-backed terrorists."[99] Such coverage of Israeli attacks, daily activities of Hezbollah's parliamentarians, and sermons and speeches of its leaders, has exploited the use of the motivational frame. Harik summates:

> This television coverage provided a contrasting image to that put forward by America and Israel and made it difficult to insinuate that Hezbollah was being shoved down Lebanon's throat by Syria or was merely following Iran's orders. It also went a long way toward immunizing Hezbollah's jihad from the American claim that the Party of God was no different than any other fundamentalist group on the terrorist list to be sidelined or eliminated sometime later. By autumn, 2001, Hezbollah's strongest detractors had to acknowledge the party's socio-political contributions to Lebanese life.[100]

Lastly, and most crucial to Hezbollah's growth in popular support has been what Kariagiannis calls the "Master Frame." Karagiannis writes: "It seems that the Party of God has adopted two different master frames, choosing one or another to approach the particular audience it is addressing."[101] The first master frame is pan-Islamism; such acceptance of a master frame can rapidly change the public's perception of regional political-stability. Again, it can be considered pan-Islamism is deeply ingrained in the fabrics of modern-resistance theology; however, in general, pan-Islamism has come to represent the utopian Islamic state that Hezbollah has espoused in prognostic framing. The second master frame is anti-globalization.[102] Such a frame is perhaps the most critical in explaining the growing support of Hezbollah, because the organization has "framed itself as part of the wider antiglobalization movement."[103] Hezbollah has

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[99] Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 196.

[100] Ibid.

[101] Karagiannis, "Hizballah," *International Institute for Counter-Terrorism*.

[102] Ibid.

[103] Ibid.

essentially claimed legitimacy in its collective action by adopting an anti-globalization platform. Although it is a loaded argument, Hezbollah shares the same ideologies that many political parties, trade unions, and leftist intellectuals share. In 2004, Hezbollah participated in the conference entitled 'Where Next for the Global Anti-War and Anti-Globalization Movements.' Among numerous representatives and organizations from the Arab world, other nations with considerably more international clout on the subject participated, including: France, Germany, England, the United States, and Spain, among others.[104] Abdel-Halim Fadlallah, vice president of Beirut's Center for Strategic Studies, a Hezbollah-affiliated center, commented: "Hezbollah succeeded in incorporating the idea of resistance as part of the international anti-globalization movements."[105] Fadlallah continued: "Through our contacts with these groups, we have managed to challenge the idea that Hezbollah is a dogmatic terrorist Islamist organization and convince part of the international left that we can be a strong partner." It has appeared that what was once illogical, due to significant ideological differences, Hezbollah has engaged in communicative outreach to organizations in countries that consider Hezbollah a terrorist organization; yet, domestically, such organizations would be identified as trade unions or NGOs. Hezbollah has therefore achieved pragmatic and realistic success beyond the boundaries of the Arab world.

As Karagiannis defines the frames of the organization, Harik's analysis delves deeper into the mind and the frames of Nasrallah. Harik claims that Nasrallah has exploited ideological ambiguities and mastered the art of addressing multiple audiences:

> Looking more closely at this ideological ambiguity as an important strategy to broaden support, we see that Hassan Nasrallah…actually uses four different contexts or 'frames' in presenting his ideas about Hezbollah's struggle against the Israelis, choosing one or another to suit the particular audience he is addressing. For instance, when speaking at a rally in the dahiyeh where the gathering is mainly Shiites and most are

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[104] Focusweb.org, "Where Next for the Global Anti-War and Anti-Globalization Movements? An International Strategy Meeting," (Conference Communique at the international meeting for the anti-war and anti-globalization movements, Beirut, Lebanon, September 17–19, 2004). http://www.focusweb.org/pdf/Beirut-Communique-en.pdf (accessed May 15, 2010).

[105] Raed Rafei, "Hezbollah finds friends abroad," *Los Angeles Times Online*, August 30, 2008. http://articles.latimes.com/2008/aug/30/world/fg-hezleft30 (accessed May 15, 2010).

likely to be partisans, jihad is spoken of as a sacred religious duty that transcends all other aims. In this context the Israelis are referred to as infidels and heretics to be drive off Muslim soil…

On the other hand, when addressing a wider Lebanese audience of mixed faiths, Nasrallah presents jihad in nationalistic terms—as a patriotic duty to liberate the homeland and drive the Israelis out of Lebanon. In this context, Hezbollah represents the Lebanese people who are 'all resisting the enemy.'

A third frame of reference used in the Hezbollah leader's discourse is trotted out when the target group is more likely to respond to an Arab nationalist context than any other…Jihad is placed in yet another context when Nasrallah addresses an international or global audience, as he often does on broadcasts by his organization's international television channel, al-Manar…Here he expresses the idea of his organization's jihad as an internationally recognized right enjoyed by all peoples whose countries are illegally occupied.[106]

In the context of the entire social movement theory and framing campaign, Harik demonstrates the need to address fundamental steps necessary to identify the causes of popular support when she asks, "Does a common and fervently believed faith—in this case, Islam—lead to the adoption of a single ideology and a common goal and practice?"[107] As demonstrated, regardless of faith, Hezbollah has achieved popular support while maintaining a single ideology and common goal intrinsically linked to Iran.

D. ANALYSIS: IS IRAN'S FRAMING CAMPAIGN WORKING?

The difficulties in assessing the level of reciprocity towards Iran's framing campaign, from both the governmental-state perspective and through Hezbollah, stem from the fact that human nature has a fleeting character. As GCC leaders may appear to be cooperative and united against Iran, day-to-day strategies change; similarly, as the populations of the Gulf region may express support of Hezbollah, what system exists to gauge the level of reciprocity from one action to the next? Iran may in fact only be a source of logistical and political opportunity, but public data will not elicit such information. Furthermore, public data is a debatable source of analysis; through the

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[106] Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 71–72.

[107] Ibid., 7.

methodologies, polling surveys may elicit uncharacteristic responses. As analysts argue certain appeals based on polling data, it becomes evident that biased views become the trend. Despite the fact that public data is debatable, there are significant indications that Iran's destabilization campaign is working.

1. Iran: The Nation, As a Person Metaphor

Iran has already demonstrated success in its destabilization campaign with the mobilization and legitimate roll of Hezbollah. However, further credible is the fact that:

> …Iran's growing influence over the Palestinians is indisputable. According to a 2007 Pew Research poll, 55 percent of Palestinians have a favorable opinion of Iran. Forty-seven percent have a favorable opinion of President Ahmadinejad versus 40 percent who don't. (Keep in mind the poll was taken at a time when Ahmadinejad's public statements were alarming almost everyone in the Middle East, including Iranians). Fifty-eight percent of Palestinians support Iran's development of a nuclear bomb, making the Palestinians the only Arabs who do.[108]

In terms of information framing, few articles specifically address Iran's use of issue framing. However, in an analysis of receptions to Iran's nuclear program, analysts seemingly conclude that Iran is in fact successful in its attempt to weaken regimes. Digby Lidstone writes:

> The [survey by YouGov, commissioned by Qatar's Doha Debates], which surveyed more than 1,000 people in 18 Arab countries last month, found that most see Iran as a bigger threat to security than Israel, with a third believing Iran is just as likely as Israel to target Arab countries.[109]

Lidstone's argument depends on the polling survey as the basis for his argument: Iran is addressing Arab countries with the appeal that Western nations are turning a blind eye, whereby Iran's appeals to Gulf States are directed more towards driving wedges between those nations that support the U.S. or Western influence.[110] Lidstone's assessment is

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[108] Baer, *The Devil We Know*, 155–156.

[109] Digby Lidstone, "Iran woos Arab states as sanctions loom," *Financial Times*, December 14, 2009, http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/56f4f554-e8d3-11de-a756-00144feab49a.html?catid=76&nclick_check=1 (accessed February 12, 2010).

[110] Lidstone, "Iran woos Arab states as sanctions loom," *Financial Times*.

seemingly correct, given the data available.[111] Lidstone further addresses the fact that a majority of Arab countries believe that Iran's intention to build a nuclear bomb is based on the intent to assert its authority regionally.[112] Lidstone's assessment of the public data presents a strong argument that Iran is successfully intimidating Gulf States. Furthermore, Lidstone analyzes the data based on region and suggests that because certain countries have better relations with Iran, Iran is successfully playing on the differences.[113] Lidstone seemingly addresses the overall concern when he cites Mustafa Alani, a security analyst at the Gulf Research Centre in Dubai, "…the six Arab countries of the Gulf Co-operation Council do not have a unified strategy towards Iran."[114] Arguably, such a lack of unified strategy indicates that Iran's information framing is successfully driving wedges between nations.

Further evidence indicates Jordanian, Egyptian, and Moroccan support, all of which are Sunni states:

> …in a 2007 Pew Research poll, 46 percent of Jordanians said they looked at the country positively…Forty percent of Egyptians look at Iran favorably…And then there's Sunni Morocco, where 42 percent of poll respondents back Iran, and 16 percent don't.[115]

What is seemingly remarkable is the fact that, in context, all three states who have strong Sunni ties and have, throughout history, shown discords that are deeply hostile to Shi'ites, should have rejected outright anything to do with Iran. Such results exemplify the wedge that Iran has driven between the ideologies of Gulf-region governments and the populous.

Though Iran has found marginal success in its destabilization campaign, Ahmadinejad's framing has been at the forefront of internal backlash. Most recently, in August 2010, Ahmadinejad came under fire for declaring that the "bogeyman snatched

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[111] The following report was used in Lidstone's analysis: YouGov: Siraj, "Can Iran be trusted not to build a nuclear bomb?" *The Doha Debates: Member of Qatar Foundation*, November 30, 2009, http://clients.squareeye.com/uploads/doha/polling/Doha%20Debates-%20Iran%20&%20Nuclear%20Weapons%20POLL.pdf (accessed February 5, 2010).

[112] Lidstone, "Iran woos Arab states as sanctions loom," *Financial Times*.

[113] Ibid.

[114] Ibid.

[115] Baer, *The Devil We Know*, 157.

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the boob," in context to the United States' ongoing threats and allegations against Iran.[116]
As aforementioned, Ahmadinejad is not wary to use excessive speech, and perhaps this is
the very reason that *Arabs* have found resolve in him. However, response to
Ahmadinejad's crude references is indicative of the growing criticism by Iranians and
political advocates. Golnaz Esfandiari writes:

> There are signs, however, that Ahmadinejad might now be facing a
> backlash over his linguistic approach. In a first, judiciary chief Sadegh
> Larijani, a senior conservative member of the Iranian establishment, on
> August 8 publicly lambasted Ahmadinejad over his language.
> "As a citizen of this country I expect the language and the rhetoric the
> president employs in his speech to be impressive, well-founded, mature,
> and fair. What sort of wording is this: 'Let him fill up to the point of
> bursting' or, 'Let him have it, he will feel the pain,'" Larijani asked, noting
> that he had brought the issue up with the president personally many times.
> Presidential adviser Ali Akbar Javanfekr has rejected Larijani's criticism
> in a post on his personal blog. "Ahmadinejad, with the same language that
> has been criticized by Larijani, is alone fighting for the rights of the
> Iranian people and it's no secret to anyone that his language is bothering
> the arrogant power and despotic [regimes] and selfish people," he wrote,
> adding that "grateful" citizens have praised and commended
> Ahmadinejad's language.[117]

Contrary to Larijani's conclusion, Ahmadinejad has found an audience that
accepts his crude rhetoric; in essence, it is a strategy to mobilize support by the "common
man." Esfandiari further addresses such a strategy in an interview with Faraj Sarkouhi,
an exiled journalist and writer:

> The language that is being used is simple language, language that relies on
> the logic of force. It's patriarchal language. It gives the right to power;
> not brain power, but there's a greater stress on physical power.[118]

Ahmadinejad's excessive rhetoric, often crude and coarse, has struck a chord with the
masses—it is deliberate and successful.

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[116] Golnaz Esfandiari, "The Language of Ahmadinejad: 'The Bogeyman Snatched the Boob,' *Radio Free Europe: Radio Liberty*, August 11, 2010, http://www.rferl.org/articleprintview/2125263.html (accessed August 13, 2010).

[117] Ibid.

[118] Ibid.

2.   Hezbollah: Iran, As a Nation Metaphor

It is without debate that Hezbollah has found success in its information campaign. However, without the political and ideological foundations for Hezbollah's campaign, Iran would be without millions of constituents. Baer poignantly addresses the very cause of success for Hezbollah's campaign, in relation to Iran's gain:

> It's obvious why Iran is succeeding. If you're a poor baker in Beirut's southern suburbs, furious about the fact your country is being occupied and looted by foreigners, whom are you more likely to throw your weight behind? Fat, self-indulgent Saudis who haven't fought a day for people like you? Or Iran's proxy, Hassan Nasrallah, who obeys Islam's antisumptuary laws, living in a small, shabby apartment like everyone else, eating simply, sitting humbly on the floor when he receives a guest, and working to keep Hezbollah free of corruption? For Lebanon, this kind of leadership has been a seismic shift, especially since Lebanon has historically been one of the most corrupt places on Earth.[119]

The Lebanese population has identified with a cause, and further scholarly analyses and interviews reveal the same patterns of thought: "not affiliated, but…cannot deny them their achievements"; "we, as a people"; "regardless of our religion and sects…are behind the Resistance."[120] Hezbollah has succeeded to mobilize a common ideology. The most recent data poll indicates a striking point:

> A 2008 Zogby poll showed that among Arabs, the three most popular leaders in the Middle East are non-Sunnis: the Shia Hezbollah leader, Hassan Nasrallah; the Alawite resident of Syria, Bashar al-Assad; and the Shia Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. And, a 2008 poll conducted by the Anwar Sadat Chair for Peace and Development and the University of Maryland revealed that support for Nasrallah is growing.[121]

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[119] Baer, *The Devil We Know*, 199.

[120] Jaber, *Hezbollah: Born with a Vengeance*, 164–197.

[121] Baer, *The Devil We Know*, 26.

Not only does the data reveal the shift in power from Sunni Islam to Shi'ite Islam, it is interesting to note that "three most popular leaders" are all working together with the same goals and policy strategies; furthermore, both Ahmadinejad and al-Assad are using Hezbollah as a proxy.

It would seem imperative that the threat to Sunni power would elicit hostility by the Arab nations; however, in 1998, Lebanon,

> signed an agreement with other Arab states that distinguished between terrorism and armed combat against foreign occupation and that the treaty holds its signatories responsible for supporting and defending resistance organizations against accusations of terrorism. That treaty states that three features characterize a resistance force: a distinctive ideology; the fact that its militant activities take place only within national border; and that its attacks are aimed exclusively at military targets. These characteristics, the report stated, fully described Lebanon's national resistance.[122]

Though Arab nations have seemingly identified the legitimacy of Hezbollah as a resistance force, the discourse against Hezbollah is justified by the role of Iran. In 2007, Saudi Arabia and other GCC states drafted to provide billions of dollars in economic aid to Lebanon, in an effort to counter Iranian aid to Hezbollah.[123] Indicative of the paradox that GCC states face is the fact that they feel threatened by the Iranian nuclear project and the potential shift in the balance of power; yet, they regard Hezbollah as a "resistance." Perhaps this is part of the larger Iranian strategy of destabilization.

E.   CONCLUSION

Jerome Corsi, a Bush administration supporter, penned a book titled *Atomic Iran*, whereby he presents cataclysmic scenarios of total annihilation of the United States and Israel by Iran. In the most poignant demonstration of the nature in which Iran has been portrayed by the United States for decades is when Corsi writes: "What has emerged as a more serious threat, especially with the mad mullahs going nuclear, is what is known as

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[122] Harik, *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism*, 182.

[123] "Mutual Threat Perceptions in the Arab/Persian Gulf: GCC Perceptions," *Goliath Business News*, June 22, 2007, http://goliath.ecnext.com/coms2/gi_0199-6709361/Mutual-threat-perceptions-in-the.html (accessed June 1, 2010).

the improvised nuclear device."[124] Corsi continues with a scenario of total destruction of New York and describes a fantasy atomic explosion and as Beeman comments, Corsi has created "mayhem that has never actually occurred."[125]

As Beeman indicates, the United States has created scenarios of mayhem and framed Iran as an irrational state time and time again.

> War on Terror…ha[s] been deliberately imbued with cosmic significance…When the secretary of the army, Pete Geren, explicitly defines the war in Iraq as a battle between America and "radical Islam" during a commencement speech at West Point, or when the commander in chief of the armed forces declares that God instructed him to remove al-Qa'ida from Afghanistan and to strike at Saddam Hussein in Iraq, as the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* reported Bush as saying in 2003, it is difficult to imagine how these young, pious and "shaken" soldiers could understand their military mission in any way other than as part of a new crusade—a cosmic war between the forces of good (us) and evil (them).[126]

Consequently, the United States has created the opportunity for Iran to succeed in its destabilization campaign. Iran is not the only entity to frame the "us" vs. "them" metaphor, and as analysts throughout all spheres of the international community have indicated, perhaps the "real" framing is from the perspective of the United States. Exemplary of indicative framing by the United States towards Iran is presented in an editorial by Debbie Hamilton.[127]   Hamilton assesses the evaluation of media on the possibility of joint talks between the United States and Iran in 2006:

> There's some variance this morning in coverage of Iran's response to the U.S. proposal for direct nuclear talks. The coverage ranges from "welcomed…but rebuffed" to "spurned"—with a later "welcomed, but" mention—to just a spurning…
>
> Associated Press: "Iran's foreign minister on Thursday welcomed direct talks with Washington on his country's disputed nuclear program but

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[124] Beeman, *"The Great Satan" vs. the "Mad Mullahs,"* 41.

[125] Ibid.

[126] Aslan, *How to Win a Cosmic War*, 97.

[127] Debbie Hamilton's website, *Right Truth*, is a blog that emphasizes "Counterterrorism, Politics, Religion." Though Hamilton's background is unavailable to make academic judgments upon, the article used on Ahmadinejad, included scholarly and reputable sources, such as *Reuters, IRNA, and USA Today,* from the context of the quote used.

rebuffed a U.S. proposal that Tehran must suspend uranium enrichment as a condition, state-run television reported."

Reuters: "Iran on Thursday spurned a U.S. offer of direct talks on its nuclear program as major world powers sought agreement on incentives to coax it to scrap potentially weapons-related atomic work."

IRNA: "Iranian Foreign Minister Manochehr Mottaki said here Thursday US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's latest remarks presented no 'new and rational solution' to Iran's nuclear case."[128]

Indicative of the long pedigree of the United States' villainization of Iran, Hamilton demonstrates the effects of Western media. Similarly, as Beeman's novel presents, the United States essentially creates the situations for Iran to use to its own advantage. Kayhan Barzegar concludes:

The prevailing view in the United States is that Ahmadinejad's foreign policy and Iran's increasing presence in the region has been offensive, expansionist, opportunistic, and often ideological. Though Iran has occasionally taken advantage of new opportunities, these characterizations have been exaggerated in the United States.[129]

The United States has aptly created "new opportunities" for Iran. The clash between civilizations, according to Samuel P. Huntington, will dominate the new era in world politics.[130] However, in a more dangerous context, Iran has created the foundations for a potential clash within Islam. Ideologies have become far more dangerous than actual politics and where Iran will triumph is when Iran's opportunities create a role in which the idea of a Shi'ite crescent is paired with proxies. As Mahmoud Ali, the medical student from Cairo, indicated, Iran is mobilizing populations outside the

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[128] Debbie Hamilton, "Ahmadinejad, the New Hero of the Arab World, Rejects Condi's Offer," *Right Truth*, June 2, 2006, http://righttruth.typepad.com/right_truth/2006/06/ahmadinejad_the.html (accessed June 1, 2010).

[129] Kayhan Barzegar, "Iran's Foreign Policy Strategy after Saddam," *The Washington Quarterly*, 33:1, (January 2010): 173.

[130] Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (Berkshire, UK: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 28.

realm of its borders.   As the *people* turn to Iran for moral support and guidance, dissatisfied with their own regime, Iran's role in the Gulf region has extended beyond sovereign confines.

IV. CONCLUSION

If Western powers continue to view Iran as an irrational and rogue state, Iran's influence campaign will have irreparable consequences. Through Hezbollah, Iran has managed to mobilize Lebanon; consequently, analysts are beginning to see Iranian dissemination in Iraq. In an undisguised warning, Baer claims, "Iraq is lost. Iran won it."[131] Baer advances his warning by assimilating the connection between Lebanon and Iraq:

> The Iranians know exactly what they have to do in Iraq. They wrote the template in Lebanon, where they learned how to manage chaos, to create order where there was none before. And they know there's nothing the United States can do to stop them from doing the same in Iraq. The U.S. ambassador in Baghdad, Ryan Crocker, called it Iran's "Lebanization" of Iraq.[132]

Analyzing Baer's conclusion, it is difficult to argue against. The sectarian ideologies that divide Shi'ites and Sunnis, and more conclusively the nationalist fragmentation between Iran and Iraq, have proved to be an illogical assumption for strategies in Iraq. Suzanne Maloney maintains that,

> [i]nstead of generating a liberal, secular democracy whose reverberations would drive out Iran's clerical oligarchs, the disastrous Bush policies fostered a sectarian Iraq that has helped empower Iranian hardliners. Rather than serving as an anchor for a new era of stability and American preeminence in the Persian Gulf, the new Iraq represents a strategic black hole, bleeding Washington of military resources and political influence while extending Iran's primacy among its neighbors.[133]

What conclusion should one draw from Baer and Maloney's warnings? Iran does not need nuclear weapons, nor regular troops to destabilize the Gulf region—Iran only needs "proxies, money, and commerce."[134]

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[131] Baer, *The Devil We Know*, 29.

[132] Ibid., 22.

[133] Suzanne Maloney, "How the Iraq War Has Empowered Iran," *Brookings*, March 21, 2008, http://www.brookings.edu/opinions/2008/0321_iraq_maloney.aspx (accessed July 1, 2010).

[134] Baer, *The Devil We Know*, 30.

A. RECOMMENDATIONS

When President Barack Obama took office, he was determined to chart a new diplomatic approach with Iran. As Obama described, his approach was "tough-minded diplomacy," with the intent that opening diplomacy with Iran would enhance the United States' leverage, whereby the United States would have adequate control over curtailing Iran's nuclear program. Obama began his campaign to open talks with Iran by broadcasting a celebratory message on Iran's New Year. Maloney notes that Obama's language was crucial in setting the stage for opening the door on diplomacy with Iran; as a result of the wide circulation and positive reception in Iran, diplomatic talks appeared to be possible.[135] It appeared as though "The Great Satan" resistance was finally null.

However, following the highly disputed presidential elections in Iran, Washington found little to no headroom to continue with its diplomatic approach. Demonstrations in Iran created instability within the government, and the United States struggled to respond effectively. Diplomacy remained the default position; however, the United States "largely presumed its failure and leapfrogged to focus on prospects for punitive measures to pressure Iran."[136]

The United States' expectations for a quick and durable resolution with Iran have been significantly supported by GCC members. More specifically, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is critically vulnerable to Iran's military capabilities, economic shortfalls, and exportation of radical Islam. During multiple Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR) conferences, officials and intellectuals of the GCC offered similar recommendations to mitigate confrontations with Iran. Such recommendations include the following: joint environments, deployability and logistics, new technology, interoperability and internal partnerships, plans for development, and regional partnerships.[137] According to General Sir Charles Guthrie, to achieve a joint environment, "…each arm of the services needs to retain its own identity and ethos, but

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[135] Maloney, "Sanctioning Iran," 133.

[136] Ibid., 131.

[137] General Sir Charles Guthrie, "Future Warfare: Implications for Gulf Defense," in The Emirates Center *The Gulf: Future Security and British Policy* (Abu Dhabi, UAE: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 1997), 19–21.

each must form part of an integrated whole on operations."[138] However, based on the arguments that Iran continues to react against Sunni rule and Western influence, it is unlikely that a solid "joint-environment" will be achieved with the UAE. Although Iran has recently reapproached the Gulf States, it is likely that Iran simply wants to dominate its neighbors to break out of its regional and international isolation.[139] Therefore, a successful joint-environment between Iran and the UAE will prove to be problematic.

Guthrie recommends the implementation of stronger transportation, communications, and distribution networks to ensure that deployability and sustainability are achieved. Guthrie argues that "…there are differing levels of support depending on the intensity of the conflict, [and] the context may not lend itself to high technology weapons, e.g., in the fight against terrorism or insurgents."[140] Effective deployability and sustainability would maintain the UAE's legitimacy within the Gulf region. Guthrie concludes: "…increasing complexity means a potential increase in individual technical education and training and in collective training. Without investment in training, there is a risk of not being able to exploit fully the advantages of new technology."[141] Similar to the principles behind deployability and sustainability, interoperability will allow the UAE to operate under all diplomatic and defense spectrums. H.H. Sheikh Salem Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah states:

> The elements that contribute to a powerful Gulf region are abundant. They stem from the intensified efforts exerted by our leaders and founding fathers and are due to their prudence and dedication. The political will of GCC leaders to keep this volatile part of the world free of futile rivalries and to deal with international and regional innovations and effective developments and influences through a collective performance that maintains the common interests, is present.[142]

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[138] Guthrie, "Future Warfare," 19.

[139] Thomas R. Mattair, *The Three Occupied UAE Islands: The Tunbs and Abu Musa* (Abu Dhabi, UAE: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2005), 243.

[140] Guthrie, "Future Warfare," 20.

[141] Ibid.

[142] H.H. Sheikh Salem Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, "Trends in GCC Defense Cooperation," in *The Gulf: Future Security and British Policy* (Abu Dhabi, UAE: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 1997), 26.

As GCC members view the United States as the security guarantor of last resort, the United States' changing policy towards Iran is complicating the continued security struggle shared by GCC members. Therefore, GCC members are now torn between the harsh realities that Iran's growing threat is too dangerous to simply dismiss and the United States' potential economic-influence in the region. As demonstrated by Maloney:

> Iran's southern neighbors in the Persian Gulf can be counted as the United States' most reliable regional allies, and their enduring fears of Iran have been exacerbated by the Islamic Republic's political retrenchment as well as by its increasing sway within the region…With 400,000 Iranian expatriates and a critical role as Iran's offshore banker and exporter, Dubai is particularly vulnerable to any shocks emanating from Iran. The Gulf Cooperation Council will cooperate fully with UN Security Council measures but it is unlikely to lead the charge for any effort to build a "coalition of the willing" in sanctioning Iran.[143]

The GCC members are the most susceptible to both Iran's growing security threat and to any economic pressure that the United States establishes. Therefore, economic sanctions will not only affect Iran, but the results will critically destabilize GCC members.

Despite growing concerns over the rise of Iranian power, distinctly through political endeavors as well as through its use of proxy groups, the United States' effort to create economic sanctions on Iran, in order to pressure Iran into abandoning policies, are simply unrealistic. In the event that enhanced economic pressure becomes policy, a culmination of two unintended outcomes is likely to occur: first, civilians may turn to proxy groups, and second, opposition movements will advance.

1.   Implication: Civilians

When using economic pressure as a strategy to influence government policy, there will always be a population that is equally susceptible to sanctions. In terms of Iran, the eruption of intense divisions, caused by the opposition political-movements, have the potential to spawn further individual hardships. Patrick Clawson, Deputy Director for Research, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, addressed the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, and identified serious structural weaknesses already

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143 Maloney, "Sanctioning Iran," 141–142.

present in Iran. Should the United States, and other countries, impose economic sanctions on Iran, the civilians, not affiliated with opposition movements, will bear brunt of the economic hardships. Reports and economic indicators already suggest serious trouble for Iran: double-digit inflation, a falling stock market, high unemployment rates, and continued power shortages.[144] Although power shortages are menial, in comparison to inflation and the crash in oil prices, deep problems are likely to arise if sanctions are imposed. Clawson indicated that natural gas consumption "continued to be highly subsidized with the result that consumption is booming" which is forcing Iran to import more gas than it exports.[145] Iranian authority arguably does not have the general population's economic situation in mind when implementing policy. In 2008, Turkmenistan cut off gas supplies to Iran, during one of the coldest months in decades. Such a sanction on Iran forced Iran to pay higher prices and resulted in the complete shut off of gas supplies to over 1.4 million people.[146]

The general population will be the lay-target in the United States' attempt to influence Iranian policy using sanctions. Thus, the question of further political instability, rather than compliance, becomes the key issue. When the population of Iran has started to indicate pressures towards a regime change, further economic pressure will likely result in a spiraling effect that could be cataclysmic to any stability within Iran. If the general population, not affiliated with opposition movements or proxy groups, views the government's backing of such groups as an economic gain, a person may turn to the medium (e.g., Hezbollah) in order to receive the minimal "government support." Although it is a drastic argument, human psychology will dissolve personal attitudes when the standard of living dramatically decreases. When the Iranian government has little emphasis on the attitudes of the general population, it is that audience that will suffer the most should sanctions go into effect, and will therefore become a humanitarian

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[144] Maloney, "Sanctioning Iran," 136.

[145] United States House of Representatives, *Testimony of Patrick Clawson, Deputy Director for Research, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, before the Committee on Foreign Affairs, United States House of Representatives,* Patrick Clawson (Washington DC: July 22, 2009), 4, http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/111/cla072209.pdf.

[146] United States House of Representatives, *Testimony of Patrick Clawson*, 4.

target of vulnerability. Furthermore, in recent developments, the United States has indicated that intensified sanctions may slide into armed confrontation. Ethan Bronner writes: "The United States hopes to prevent any slide into armed confrontation by increasing its diplomatic relations with Syria and appealing to President Bashar al-Assad to stop transferring arms to Hezbollah."[147] Therefore, Washington already understands the implications of intensified sanctions: an escalation of intensified armed-confrontation.

2.   Implication: Opposition Movements

Directly associated with the impact that sanctions have on civilians is the possibility to establish opposition movements. In order to create policy change, what the United States and most countries aim to achieve is the reestablishment of power roles. However, what poses a problem to the reestablishment of power roles in Iran is the fact that popular and elite backlash against Ahmadinejad already exists. Therefore, if the situation in Iran is the outcome that the United States wishes to establish by using sanctions, the question becomes, Why is the Iranian government not abandoning hard-line policy? The current atmosphere should then create a situation where the vision of the United States is a reality; however, such is not the case. Maloney points out that

> sanctions would advance the nascent opposition movement within Iran…any deterioration in the population's standard of living will generate a renewed backlash against Iran's leadership at a time when it is already suffering a profound legitimacy crisis.[148]

The United States and supporters of sanctions must realize that when deterioration of power roles is already in place, economic pressure will have little to no effect in changing political ideologies. Economic pressure will likely persuade those Iranians who are part of the opposition movement to leave the country rather than act as "allies" in the United States' effort. Therefore, the problem that the general population will face comes back into the picture—economic sanctions will not result in governmental compliances, but will rather impede on the directive course of action. Furthermore, Clawson warns

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[147] Ethan Bronner, "Hoping Sanctions Work by Readying Gas Masks," *New York Times Online*, (2010). http://www.nytimes.com/2010/03/05/world/middleeast/05mideast.html (accessed March 4, 2010).

[148] Maloney, "Sanctioning Iran," 138.

that "Iranian public opinion is likely to exaggerate the impact of the foreign pressure and to blame the Ahmadinejad government's hard-line stance for the country's economic difficulties."[149] Therefore, civil unrest will only continue and possibly cause a wave of resentment that will be more difficult to address than policy derailment.

3.   Historical Evidence: The Implications of Sanctions

In Suzanne Maloney's research on the limitation of economic pressure against Iran, she indicates three principal reasons why sanctions have not succeeded. Maloney writes:

> History has demonstrated that there simply are no silver bullets with respect to Iran…While it is clear that sanctions impose a significant cost on Tehran, it is equally evident that, despite the duration and scope of U.S. economic pressure on Iran, sanctions have not succeeded in advancing their ultimate objective, namely transforming Iran's foreign and security policy for three principal reasons: first, the largely unilateral nature of the punitive measures; second, Tehran's countermeasures, or its capacity for mitigation, retaliation, and avoidance; and the third, the apparent resistance of Iranian security policy to economic pressures.[150]

Maloney's extensive research exemplifies the harsh realities that sanctions will impose on Iran, using historical references and attitudes as a case study. In her research, Maloney indicates that the ongoing implementation of sanctions on Iran, beginning in 1979, has not hindered political disagreements, but rather strengthened the Iranian national identity: "Past episodes of economic constraint have enhanced cooperation among Iran's bickering factions and increased preparedness to absorb the costs of perpetuating problematic policies."[151] Essentially, sanctions on Iran have historically indicated that the governing authorities view restrictions as a symbolic defiance that only enhances political disregard towards the United States.   More recently, Saeed Jalili, Iran's nuclear negotiator, commented that "We [Iranian's] have lived with sanctions for 30 years…they [the United

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[149] United States House of Representatives, *Testimony of Patrick Clawson*, 1.

[150] Maloney, "Sanctioning Iran," 140.

[151] Ibid., 143.

States] do not frighten us. On the contrary, we welcome new sanctions."[152] Such attitudes indicate the Iranian belief of self-sufficiency and Iranian identity. The urgency to deal with draining Iranian sources seemingly causes the government to act with preparedness, rather than change political posture. Maloney writes, "…Iranian leaders react to sanctions, both real and threatened, by economizing even where such steps risk alienating crucial political constituencies, rather than shift their posture on matters judged vital to the regime's security."[153] Therefore, to assume that Iran's political and security agenda will change due to economic pressure has little basis.

4.   Sanctions as a Last Resort

Although sanctions on Iran are arguably the worst tactical thought at this critical point in Iran's history, if the United States and other nations choose to take economic pressures, they should focus on applications that will target the government and the proxies, and that will have the least fatal consequences to the people. Governments should determine specific forms of sanctions that will have the most direct impact on the government, without further influence to proxy groups. As many analysts argue, an oil embargo would have the most crippling effect; however, the external consequences of an oil embargo will discredit such arguments. George Perkovich, Vice President for Studies at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, suggests that an oil embargo "must be discounted."[154] Perkovich continues:

> People know that most of Iran's income comes from oil exports and assume naturally that the most potent sanction would be to embargo that oil…if the world embargoes Iran's oil, the price of the oil the world buys will increase.[155]

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[152] George Jahn, "Iran reveals existence of a second uranium enrichment plant, officials say," *The International Institute for Strategic Studies* (September 25, 2009), http://www.iiss.org/whats-new/iiss-in-the-press/september-2009/iran-reveals-existence-of-a-second-uranium-enrichment-plant-officials-say/ (accessed February 20, 2010).

[153] Maloney, "Sanctioning Iran," 144.

[154] George Perkovich, "Iran's Nuclear Program After the 2005 Elections," in *Iran's Nuclear Program: Realities and Repercussions*, (Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2006), 56.

[155] Ibid., 56.

B.   CONCLUSION

The argument that sanctions will offer particular utility in forcing Iranian political and security policy change, thereby causing limitations in non-state actor operations, has little basis. Maloney's extensive research on the legitimacy and relevancy of sanctions pinpoints an overarching theme: sanctions on Iran, historically, do not ameliorate political agendas; due to a lack of coherent objectives and the regime's continued demonstration of will and repression, struggling oppositions often do not hold any authority in Iranian cooperation. On September 28, 2009, Mir Hossein Mousavi, candidate for the 2009 Iranian elections, urged nations not to impose sanctions against Iran, stating that

> sanctions would not actually act against the government—rather, they would only inflict grave distress against a people who have experienced enough disaster in their own melancholic statesmen.[156]

Although proponents of economic sanctions argue that the atmosphere in Iran is the most ideal for a successful political reform, indications would arguably show that diplomatic approaches are the most appropriate for success. The break in the traditional power brokers is starting to dissolve traditional regime alliances and the elite have demonstrated their backlash against the Ahmadinejad government.

Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, one of the world's most prominent applied game theorists and a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford, claims that Ahmadinejad's power is relatively non-existent in the overall governmental authority; rather, Iranian "power" is considerably in the hands of "moneyed interests." Essentially, Bueno de Mesquita argues that Ahmadinejad is slowly on the decline in literal and symbolic power in the eyes of the Iranian's.[157] As aforementioned, the political atmosphere is strategically beneficial for diplomatic intervention by the United States.

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[156] Mir Hossein Mousavi, "Mousavi's Statement #13: Violence is Not the Solution," *Facebook.com* (September 28, 2009): http://www.facebook.com/note.php?note_id=146201207605 (accessed February 20, 2010).

[157] Bruce Bueno de Mesquita, "Talks: Bruce Bueno de Mesquita predicts Iran's Future" (lecture, TED Talks, February 2009), http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/bruce_bueno_de_mesquita_predicts_iran_s_future.html (accessed February 20, 2010).

The key actors are those with money, the elite, and they currently have a strategic power-advantage over the governing authority. The United States must not continue to take an economic-pressure approach with Iran. History has indicated that sanctions have relative importance to political agendas and in fact solidify internal opposition. As the world continues to fear the capabilities of the Iranian nuclear program and the growing threat of asymmetrical warfare, the United States must look at historical evidence and continue the often intractable diplomatic process with Iran in order to curb Iran's crossing of the threshold of complete crisis with escalated proxy-group involvement. Baer summates:

> …America could take its medicine and sit down at the negotiating table with Iran, treat it like the power it has become, and see what it has to offer. This would be a bitter pill, acknowledging Iran's predominance in the Middle East—declaring Iran a superpower if that's what it wants to be called. But we would finally find out if there's truly a confluence of interests…We would answer the question: As an ally, would Iran be more reliable and more reasonable than the Sunnis, the sect we've so long placed such blind trust in?[158]

Therefore, to pose the question again: What conclusion should one draw from Baer and Maloney's warnings about Iraq? Baer's conversation with a contact in Hezbollah may elicit the bases of personal analysis:

> In February 2003, a little less than a month before Americans invaded Iraq, a contact in Hezbollah called me, gleefully announcing that the Iraqi-born members of Hezbollah were packing up to go home. Many of them hadn't been back since 1980, when Saddam expelled them to Iran and Lebanon.
>
> "What are they going to do?" I asked, purposely sounding naïve.
>
> "Organize Iraqi Hezbollah, of course. Take over Iraq."
>
> "But how many of them are there?"
>
> "I don't know. Two or three hundred."
>
> "Is that enough?"
>
> "It was in Lebanon, no?" he said as he hung up the phone…

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[158] Baer, *The Devil We Know*, 251.

Iran knew that with Saddam gone, secular Iraq was dead, making the Iraqi Shia ripe for the picking to fight a holy war against Western occupation. The Iraqi Shia would reject occupation just as surely as the Lebanese had rejected in 1982. And Iran also knew Lebanon would be the strategic blueprint for its war of liberation: Iran would dominate Iraq not by invading it outright, but rather through proxies, spreading religious conviction, and employing the new form of guerrilla warfare it had learned in Lebanon.[159]

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[159] Baer, *The Devil We Know*, 21.

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